

CHRISTY'S STORY // I WANTED TO DIE // A GOLD MEDAL LIFE // PURPOSE IN ORPHAN MINISTRY

# lifechange

THE PURPOSE ISSUE

WHY ARE WE HERE  
**ANYWAY?**

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MY  
**SEARCH**  
FOR  
**PURPOSE**





## contents

### PURPOSE ISSUE

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Special thanks to many members and friends of LifeChange/Weymouth Church who have contributed time, prayer, money and expertise to make this issue of LifeChange Magazine possible.

Issue 6, "The Purpose Issue"  
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LifeChange Magazine is published as a free gift to our community. The purpose of this publication is to share the life-changing principles of the Bible in a friendly, practical format. "The Purpose Issue" is sixth in a series of LifeChange Magazines offering Christian, non-denominational perspective on life issues.

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To contact the editors of LifeChange with questions or feedback, visit [www.lifechangemedina.com](http://www.lifechangemedina.com) or call (330) 723-1750.

### MISS SOMETHING?

Previous issues of LifeChange can be downloaded from our website and hard copies can be requested from the church office as long as supplies last. We have action teams available to assist you with overcoming stress, working through marriage and relationship problems, digging out of debt, dealing with past hurts and seeking freedom from various addictions.

You can submit prayer requests and ask spiritual questions by visiting our website or calling our office.

## JOIN THE LIFECHANGE MOVEMENT

Would you like to connect with people from across Medina County who are interested in knowing God more, praying for our community, meeting people's needs and sharing the life-changing truth of the Bible?

**The LifeChange Movement is an initiative to seek spiritual renewal and to take bold action.**

We meet twice a month to pray and strategize. Outreaches are being planned to spur churches toward revival, to share the gospel, and to see lives change by God's power. If you'd like to learn more about joining this outreach-action team, or if you'd like to be added to the update list for movement events and local ministry opportunities, visit [www.LifeChangeMedina.com](http://www.LifeChangeMedina.com).

## CHURCH THIS SUNDAY?

We'd love to meet you personally on this or any Sunday morning. Our church family has two great locations for worship and Bible learning:

- **Weymouth Church** – 3398 South Weymouth Road, Medina (near the Rt. 3 – I-71 interchange)
- **LifeChange Church** – 787 Lafayette Road, Medina (at Williams-on-the-Lake, near the Fairgrounds)

For service times and more specifics, visit [www.WeymouthChurch.com](http://www.WeymouthChurch.com)

## TALK ABOUT PURPOSE?

If you've felt the "emptiness" of a life without eternal purpose and you'd like to start a relationship with God, our team would love to answer your questions and help you along on your spiritual journey. Call the LifeChange Team at (330) 723-1750 or email [office@weymouthchurch.com](mailto:office@weymouthchurch.com). When you call, mention the "Purpose Issue" of the magazine so that we can connect you with one of the volunteers who helped put this publication together.

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# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MY LIFE?

In the actual "living" of life, we never quite find the time to answer the most fundamental questions: "Is there more to life? Is there something more that I should be doing? When my life is over, will I have spent my time doing the important things? How will I be remembered?"

As early as fifth grade, I recall struggling with the notion of life's purpose. "Are you kidding me – an elementary school kid playing baseball, collecting rocks, hanging with friends, working a paper route, attending school - dealing with the question of the meaning of life!?"

Yes, the question nagged at me, it would not go away. As time passed through junior high, high school and upon entering college, I was convinced that the answer was to contribute to mankind in some way. For me the path to do this was science.

A funny thing happened on my way to becoming a scientist. In my freshman year of college, I was presented with the claims of Jesus Christ, the

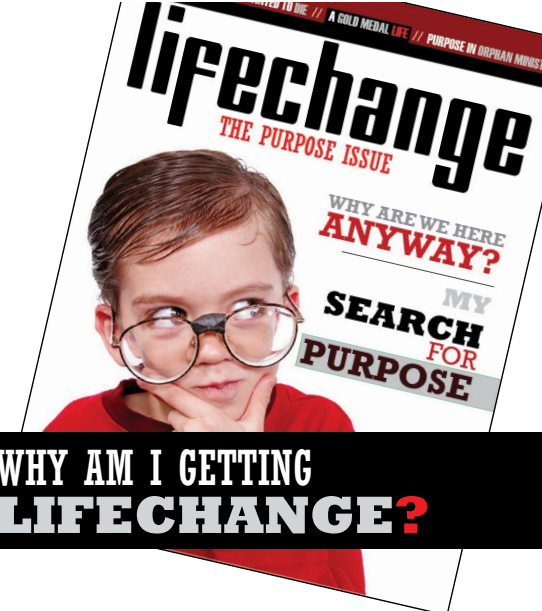
assertion of his being "the way and the truth and the life." This was a definitive statement that I did not have as part of my purpose. What bothered me the most was the implication that Jesus had to be not just a portion, but the very focal point of my purpose. I wanted no part of that!

Long story short, I became a Christian (very reluctantly) because I became more and more convinced that Jesus' claim was the key to answering the question of life's purpose. I did end up in the field of science, studying the wonder of God's world. However, it is God, my relationship with him, and his design for my life where true purpose lies.

This is what the Purpose Magazine is all about. The promise from God is that those who diligently seek the answer will find it. It is our hope that this issue of LifeChange will serve as a springboard for you to answer one of life's most important questions!

**DAVE ANDERSON**  
PURPOSE ISSUE TEAM LEADER

## "IT IS GOD, MY RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, AND HIS DESIGN FOR MY LIFE WHERE TRUE PURPOSE LIES."



## WHY AM I GETTING LIFECHANGE?

This is the sixth in a series of free magazines being mailed to every household in Medina, and a few surrounding areas as well. It has been written and designed right here in our community by members of LifeChange/Weymouth Church. We're not out to get anything from you, there's no obligation on your part at all. It's just a gift.

We've seen time and time again how God changes lives through biblical principles. Our prayer is that by sharing these with our friends and neighbors, we can make a positive difference in Medina and beyond.

Previous issues have addressed money management, overcoming stress, experiencing forgiveness, conquering addictions and enriching love relationships. If you would like back copies of LifeChange magazines, we would be happy to provide them as long as our supplies last. Or, if you like, you can download digital copies at [www.LifeChangeMedina.com](http://www.LifeChangeMedina.com).

Also, for each topic our magazines have covered, we have a dedicated team of people who have "been there, done that" and have experienced personally the life-changing power of God. Feel free to contact us anytime and we can put you in touch with someone who could encourage or pray with you, whatever it is you may be going through. (330) 723-1750



# WHY'D YOU JOIN THE TEAM?

*We asked a few of the  
volunteers who made this issue  
of LifeChange Magazine  
possible the ultimate question:  
“Why?”*

## BONNIE MANFULL / WADSWORTH

As a young mother, occasionally the question would whisper within me as to what God's purpose was for my life. I would answer that question with what I was doing at the time, whether it was chauffeuring the kids to their sporting events, cooking dinner for my husband and three children, or being a group leader in a Bible study. My children grew into adults and got

married, and my husband retired from teaching and coaching sports at Wadsworth High School. Five years after retirement, my husband suddenly and unexpectedly passed away. As time passed and grief diminished, the question as to my purpose and even my identity became much louder, and I did not have easy answers. Who am I now that I am no longer the wife of Dick Manfull, who was known as a teacher and coach? What purpose does God have for a widow, and, specifically, what am I to be and do?

In the 1970s there was little slogan that encouraged people to “bloom where they are planted.” I was reminded of that slogan when I recently heard a Christian speaker say that God wants us to be the best we can be in the place we are in at this present time. That resonated with me and I thought about it for my life. I realized that, for now, I am to be the best mother and grandmother I can be. That means no pity parties and no long face to let everyone know of my status, but to be encouraging, loving and kind to other people who are hurting. To do all of this means I must trust Jesus daily for the strength, love and wisdom that I need for living my life and for helping others. Therefore, when I was asked about joining the “Purpose Team,” I was excited to be a part of this magazine because I have a new purpose in life.

## JIM & VICKI STEPHENS / MEDINA

We have been attending Weymouth Community Church for six years. We joined the Purpose Team along with our daughter, Katlyn, because there are so many people who have not discovered God's purpose for their lives. It is our prayer that this magazine can help people find real meaning in life.

## JOHN LURTZ / MEDINA

I joined the LifeChange Team because of the amount of people I meet who have the same question: Why? It is a simple question, but for some people it can reveal underling conditions of hopelessness, uselessness and despair. It also demonstrates a need to have life make sense and a need to feel we make a difference. My prayer is that God will use the Purpose Issue to catch people's attention, draw them to himself and reveal to them the real purpose for their lives.

## BILL & SANDY BAZEMORE / HINCKLEY

We are a part of this effort because we see the magazine as a practical way to reach out to our community. The Purpose Issue is probably one of the most relevant topics for us because we watched Sandy's brother, Brad (see page 18), struggle with his purpose in life at the time of the Kent State shootings.

## GAY FRANTZ / MEDINA

I came to the Lord many years ago, but the question of why I was created has always puzzled me. When it was decided that a LifeChange Magazine would incorporate the topic of God's purpose, I wanted to be a part of that team. Our research has been a revelation to me. Had I understood what God has said about this earlier in my life, I probably would have made many changes. I hope we are able to reach out with this teaching tool and benefit our readers with these same questions. I also made new friends and appreciate the work and love shown by the other team members.

>> These and other volunteers on the LifeChange Team would be happy to discuss the purpose of life with you – via email, phone or even in-person. If you'd like to get some counsel, encouragement or just chat, call (330) 723-1750 and ask for the LifeChange Team, or email [office@weymouthchurch.com](mailto:office@weymouthchurch.com).



## KIDS SPEAK UP!

### *Why Did God Make You?*

So I can have babies. (Abby, 5)

I'm supposed to work. (Micah, 6)

So I can tell people about Jesus. (Avery, 5)

Because my mommy wanted some kids and God picked out two girls. (Charlotte, 5)

So He would have someone to worship Him. (Silas, 6)



pur·pose /'pərpəs/

**noun:** The reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.



# WHY ARE WE HERE, ANYWAY?

“Meaningless! Everything is meaningless!” says the writer of Ecclesiastes, a biblical book with some not-so-encouraging conclusions about human life. The author contends that nothing “under the sun” has lasting meaning, and that to find our purpose, we must look beyond this world.

The story begins with a king who has everything a person could desire: power, pleasure, a mighty army, prestige, and plenty of financial security. In other words, he started out with what most of us spend a lifetime seeking. His conclusion: “Everything is so weary and tiresome! No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content.”

The Bible devotes twelve chapters to this man’s “experiments” with purpose; his attempts at satisfaction through hard work, education, pleasures, buildings, power, even religion, and how each experiment left him empty and depressed. He came to the place where he said, “I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless. It was like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere, so I hated life.”

Deep inside my heart I find agreement with the writer, looking at the passing pleasures and promises of the world. “If this world is all there is, why should I bother?” All we have will one day be taken from us by death, and all we’ve worked for or enjoyed will be absorbed into the next generation, who themselves will try to “have it all” as well.

It’s easier not to think about this sort of thing - just go on with my life and ignore this warning. But I can’t do that. If there is a purpose to find, I want it.

DAN JARVIS

If there is a way to break the endless cycle of chasing the wind, I want to know how.

Every day we see the sun shining above us, and every day the majority of our time is spent dealing with earth-bound issues. It would be easy to get so caught up in “under the sun” activity that we forget to pursue lasting purpose.

The author’s conclusion is found in 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes, where he urges us to “... remember your creator now ... before the silver cord of life snaps.”

Life under the sun only has meaning when God is the focus. He created us with a purpose; fulfilling His goals is primary reason for our existence. If we live for other things - wonderful as they may be - they will never satisfy the cry of our hearts, and they won’t last beyond this life.

Jesus asked: “How do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?”

## THE MEANING OF LIFE

We have to understand the *meaning* of our lives before we can ascertain the specific *mission* of our lives. In other words, if you don’t know why you were made, you’ll never have a clear picture of what you are supposed to do!

First, we can ask, “Why did God make us?” In all of my studies, theological and philosophical, I’ve come to this conclusion: “God made us because He wanted to.”







# THE MISSION OF LIFE

Jesus gave us a head start on understanding the mission of life when He singled out the “first and greatest” commandment. Matthew reports:

An expert in religious law tried to trap him with this question: “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

That means the real key to life is in how we learn to love God and each other. Because God first loved us, our mission is to love Him in return! And while there are many ways we could potentially show our love for God, the Bible outlines five that are definitely part of our personal mission:

## 1. OBEDIENCE TO JESUS’ COMMANDS

Jesus said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.” I can learn how to do this by reading the Gospels (the four accounts of Jesus’ life and teaching that appear in the Bible) and asking, “How can I apply these teachings to my life?” When we study the words and actions of Jesus, we show that we are serious about fulfilling the purpose of our lives.

## 2. TURNING AWAY FROM EVIL

Psalms 97 says, “You who love the LORD, hate evil! He protects the lives of his godly people and rescues them from the power of the wicked.” Loving God means I turn away from the evil that lurks in my own heart – pride, lust, greed, envy, bitterness, anger, selfishness and anything else that doesn’t honor His law. This part of our life-mission is admittedly difficult, given all the temptations we face. To this, the Bible says: “If we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”

## 3. SERVING PEOPLE IN NEED

From the Gospel of Matthew, regarding the final judgment: “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

“Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

“And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’” (Matthew 25:34-40)

## 4. SPREADING GOOD NEWS

The most specific “mission statement” from Jesus came when He commissioned His followers to share His message everywhere. He said, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.” (Mark 16:15) I get to be a part of extending God’s love and growing His family, by introducing more and more people to Him. Now that I’ve discovered life’s true purpose, I’m excited to share the life-changing truth of the Bible with anyone who will listen!

## 5. PRAISING GOD

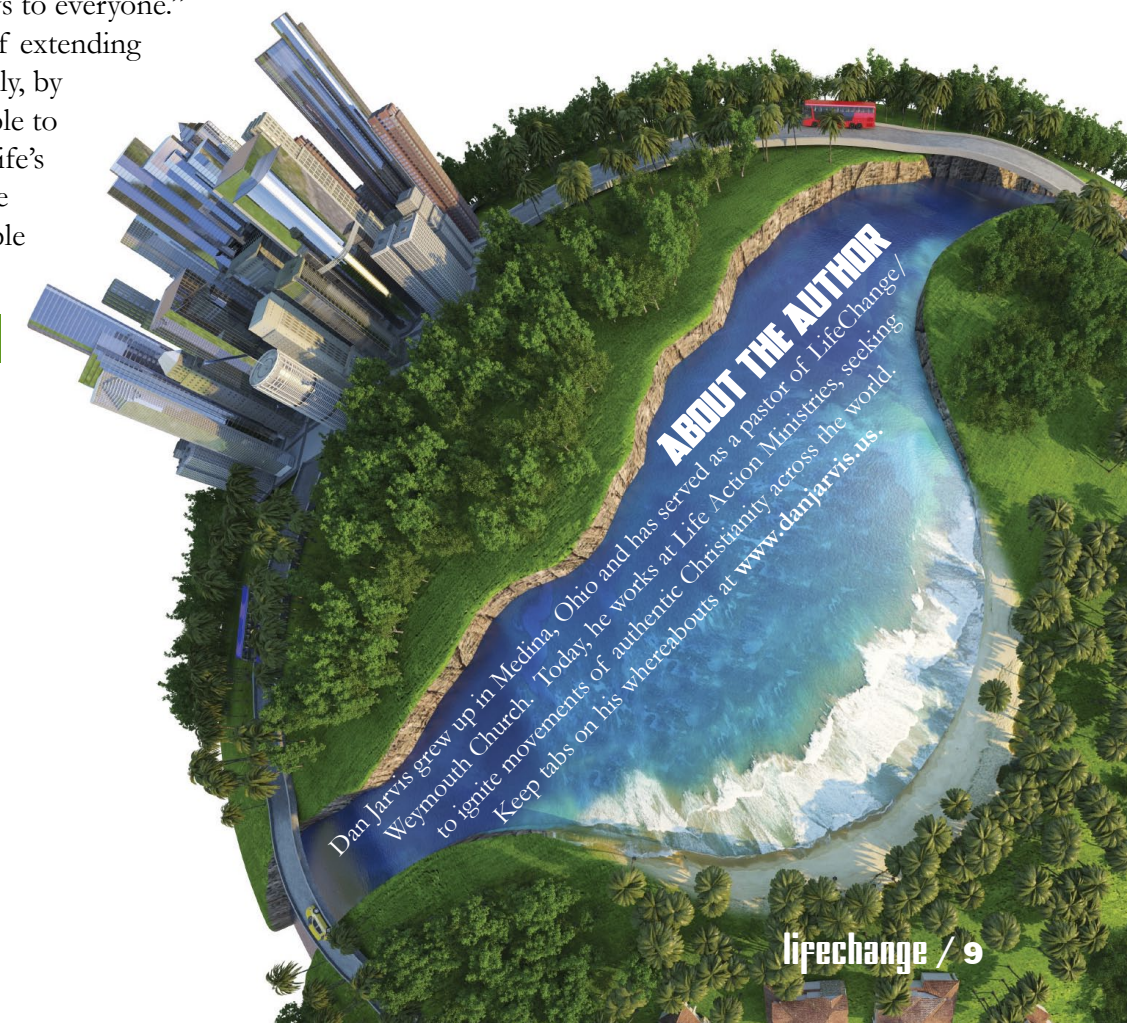
As I learn more about how much God has done for me, and how much He loves me, I am delighted to praise Him. The Bible offers examples of people doing this in private prayer, public declarations, music, art, service – even in the way they conduct themselves in family and work life. Everything about our existence can be connected to our relationship to God – we

can live our lives for his glory. As the Psalmist prayed: “I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendor and your wonderful miracles. Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue; I will proclaim your greatness.”

Here’s something exciting: once you start fulfilling God’s purposes, you’ll sense His presence and power in your life. You’ll look back weeks or months from now and see how many ways He has changed you.

Rather than the discouragement of tiresome life “under the sun” that the ancient king declared “utterly meaningless,” your life will be full of joy. The things you do will count forever, not just in this life. Each day, whether circumstances bring sorrow or happiness, will be filled with eternal meaning. I know it has worked that way in my life. And I trust the same will be true for you.

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him. - 1 Corinthians 2:9





# Christy's Story

An Interview With an  
ABORTION SURVIVOR

by Bonnie Manfull

Imagine how you would feel if you learned that, before you came crying into this world, someone had tried to destroy your life and prevent your birth. Seventeen-year-old Christy learned this truth while watching the Merv Griffin Show featuring “Abortion Survivors.” As she watched a woman without arms who had survived abortion, Christy’s father quipped that that

could have been her. Christy asked, “What do you mean?” Her father urged her to go talk to her mother in the kitchen.

From there, Christy learned that her mother became pregnant at age 18. Both of Christy’s parents came from dysfunctional homes. Her mother, Beth, had been abandoned by her mother when she was 5-years old, and she was raised by an emotionally-distant

stepmother. Christy’s father, Rick, also had a rough family background. Upon learning that they she was pregnant, the teenagers did not know what to do.

In 1973, just days before *Roe vs. Wade* became law, the Christy’s parents found themselves in a New York abortion clinic. Beth took a number, and, within minutes of her number being called, she had the procedure performed. It was quick and anonymous, and they thought everything was taken care of.

Later that spring, Beth noticed that her body was changing and there was a bulge in her stomach. *She was still pregnant!* Beth decided to have the baby, and in June, after graduation, she and Rick were married. Two months later, on August 22, 1973, Christina was born. She was a completely healthy, 7-pound baby girl, with no birth defects or problems. As Beth held her newborn daughter, she declared her to be “her sweet, beautiful Christina.”

One would wonder if this affected Christy’s relationship with her parents, and especially her mother. Christy says that it did not: “Nothing changed after that revelation ... everything stayed the same.” Christy was not angry with her parents, because she grew up feeling loved and secure. She thought this announcement affected her mother more than it did her. This news did, however, stir something in 17-year-old Christy -- she determined to learn more about abortion.

A few months later, Christy went off to college and found herself among a minority of students who were “pro-life.” When discussions came up among her peers, she did not tell those who debated with her about her own perilous beginning.

But that timidity has changed in the years since, and today Christy feels God’s purpose in her life is all about restoration. In October of 2010, as Christy studied the Book of Isaiah, she learned of the mandate to care for widows and orphans. She immediately thought of her widowed grandmother, and now takes her children for visits as often as she can -- nearly once a week. In getting to know her grandmother, Christy has gained a better understanding of all the dysfunction in her family tree. Christy’s grandmother related how her own mother

hated her and did not want her, and would say “evil things” to her. This is generational, because Christy’s great-great grandmother would refer to her own daughter as “step-child” and would not call her by her name.

Christy said, “So, you see a mom who hated her daughter, another mom who hated her daughter, and that hate-pattern trickled down until her grandmother abandoned her three daughters, and then my mother tried to abort me. It is the enemy’s (Satan’s) determination to destroy families -- it is the spirit of destruction that follows families. Only Jesus can stop this pattern.” Christy continued, “That is why I love the theme of restoration in the Bible. Every time you read it, you see God’s purposes revealed. This story of restoration continues because God saved me, and now my three children are also saved by Jesus Christ.”

When Christy was asked about her personal insights for her life since God has given her a second chance, she said, “I know He has a purpose for my life, and I believe this is true for everyone.” She said, “It is a matter of knowing Him and pouring His Word into our hearts so that we understand it. Then, when He calls us to act, we do what He wants us to do.”

“When I was growing up, my faith was my parents’ faith -- I believed it because that was how I was taught. When I was 22, I was walking my own way -- a way that was far from God, and He stopped me in my tracks. At my birth, God had hidden me in the shadow of His hand and saved me from murder. Then, at 22-years old, while I was going in my own direction, it was as though He came down and put His hand over me again. He took me back for Himself, for restoration, and for His own purposes. In the beginning, that purpose was to make me the wife of my husband, and then to make me the mother of my three daughters.”





When she hears a woman express the opinion that she has a right over her own body and a right to control her own destiny, Christy's first thought is that such a woman is in need of Jesus, the Savior. She adds that, "God is Sovereign and reigns over all life, and my life is proof of that. People will choose what they want, and they want comfort and convenience and that is why they turn to abortion." She continues, "For my parents, their lives would have been so much easier not having me, as they had to put their lives and plans on hold. But the pursuit of self-fulfillment is a deception of the devil. God has a greater purpose for life."

When asked if she ever wonders why God allowed her to live, she said, "Yes, I do wonder about that, because we are now up to 53 million of my generation that are gone -- and I am not. I do not know why God saved my life, but He did."

Christy says that abortion has affected her mother, and her mother deeply regrets that decision. Her mother knows and accepts that she is 100% forgiven, but the scar of the regret is still there. She is reminded of what she is capable of; but the fact is, we are all capable of doing evil things.

As for restoration, Christy's mother went to Ghana, Africa ten years ago, and was overcome by the needs of the children. In 2005, she was compelled to build a building to house the orphans, and they now have an orphanage with 29 children living there. "My mother has always had that hunger for God, and she had a call to go to Africa." Christy's husband manages the orphanage, which is called the "House of Hope," and

her mother helps with loving and planning for the orphans. Christy sees this as God's plan and purpose for her husband right now, as he has developed a real love for the children. They are building another orphan home as money allows, and are hoping to add job training and a day-care program to train young girls who would otherwise fall into prostitution.

#### **What does Christy say to those women who may be contemplating abortion?**

"It sounds like a pat answer, and I hate pat answers, but, God has a plan and a purpose for you. Isaiah 46:9-10 says, 'there is no one like God...He knows the end from the beginning...His purpose will stand.' An abortion will lead to unknown trouble for you. There is no way to tell how it will affect your health, your emotions and your spiritual life. There is no way to tell who your baby would have been, or how much precious joy and treasure he or she would have brought to this world, and to the countless others that individual would have touched."

"However, God does know these things," Christy explains. "He values life because He is the author and sustainer of life (Acts 3:15, Col. 1:17). He delights in the creation of new life, and we share in that divine plan when we bring life into this world through our own bodies. God knows the beginning and the end, and will do what is perfect and right for you if you are willing. The situation may not seem ideal, but God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 5:8) -- there is none like Him."

"I am 38-years old and have a husband who is applying his life to the work of the Lord through an orphan ministry in Ghana alongside my mom. We have three girls whose lives I am dedicated to consecrating to the Lord continually. My grandma found joy at the end of her life through a restored relationship and a second chance. I am a friend to many women; and, perhaps, through this publication, the words of my story will influence women I will never know, Lord willing. God uses people who were once deemed useless and inconvenient, and puts them to noble use for His sovereign and unshakable purposes."



## unplanned pregnancy?

Call to learn about available help in our community.

THE OAKS FAMILY CARE CENTER  
(330) 220-7777  
[www.oaks-family-care.org](http://www.oaks-family-care.org)

OASIS OF HOPE  
(330) 723-3600  
[www.oasisofmedina.com](http://www.oasisofmedina.com)

## is it you?

Perhaps as you read these words, you have a child growing within you, and you aren't sure what to do. Do not listen to the voices in your life that are encouraging abortion. It may seem like the easy way out of a tough situation -- but it isn't. Please call a number above for some counsel. God can help you through this situation; He can meet your needs. In fact, there are a number of people here, in the LifeChange / Weymouth Church family, that would be willing to help you. We can be your family during this time. Call and ask to speak with our Care Pastor at (330) 723-1750.

## do you know someone considering abortion?

1 Pray for the woman and her growing baby. Ask God to intervene to save the life of the precious child, and to provide wisdom and help for the mother.

2 Call and offer your help. Some women consider abortion because they feel alone, or they don't see any other option. Others feel pressure from boyfriends or parents to "take care of it." Let her know that you are there to help her -- that she isn't alone!

3 If you are in the Medina County area, contact one of the care centers listed above. They can provide all sorts of counseling and practical help to teens or women facing the difficulties of unplanned pregnancy. If you are elsewhere, visit [www.lifecall.org](http://www.lifecall.org) or call 1-800-662-2678 to find a local agency that can help.





I was born in the farming community of Millersburg, Ohio. Our family moved to Cleveland during the beginning of America's involvement in the Second World War. War jobs boomed in our city, which helped end the Great Depression. We were poor, but it seemed like everyone around me was in the same condition, so I never felt deprived.

I began to doubt the existence of God when I was about twelve. At eighteen the curriculum of evolution taught at our school more strongly enforced my doubts. However, I did not want to believe that God was nonexistent. But to say I believed when I was so unsure seemed very hypocritical. I needed to know the truth and had so many questions. I experienced a terrible void in my life and for the first time felt absolute cold depression. I had never experienced this before.

One day when I was feeling particularly low, I prayed from the very depths of my soul. Ten days later I had a terrifying experience which brought me to the brink of death. This experience taught me in a variety of ways that His existence was a fact and was the beginning of my earnest search of the Bible and other books to help me understand. It was there at my fingertips all the time. What seemed difficult for me to comprehend before became the most exciting reading I ever encountered.

It led me to other believers who also had faith in God. I now understood the great love God has for us. Even so, I still didn't know my own reason for being born. What was my *purpose*?

At first, I thought my personal purpose in life was to utilize my talents and abilities. Later, I came to understand my job is bigger than that – I am to worship, learn about and serve God. I should try and promote all that God and Heaven are about. My talents, of course, are a part of this – they can be used as tools to reach out to other people.

Since realizing this, I've found a new level of fulfillment in life. Jesus Christ came to earth and sacrificed His life to teach us of His love, care, and mercy; love being the greatest of these. Whatever we do, we should do it to honor Him – whether that is working at being the best mother, father, teacher, scientist, artist, animal trainer or secretary – we can do all of these things, as the Bible says, "to the glory of God."

Jesus told us to let our light shine so that we can introduce others to Him. I am trying to share some of that light. It is for His purpose, glory and love I feel we are here.



# FINDING PURPOSE IN THE ORPHAN MINISTRY



CINDY ANDERSON

It was 2002, four-and-a-half years after we had adopted our two children from Russia, a ten-year-old girl and six-year-old boy. I continued to work after the adoption as a legal secretary at a Cleveland law firm, a position that I had held for over 15 years. To be honest, I derived a great deal of significance and purpose from my job. My work was valued. I was part of a team working on high-profile cases. But keeping up the hectic pace of a full work week, with its daily one-and-a-half hour commute, and mustering the remaining energy to meet family needs in the evening (both in the immediate and the extended family) was taking a heavy toll on me. I was worn out!

So, after 29 years, I left the workforce to stay at home. The initial relief from the tiresome task of keeping all the balls in the air soon faded to the life of the routine. I was having difficulty finding fulfillment in the mundane day-to-day obligations of cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, paying bills, checking homework, etc. I no longer felt respected or appreciated. I was unhappy and unfulfilled.

Slowly, it dawned on me that this new direction in life was actually a desire God had put in my heart years ago. I remembered that as a single adult I had planned to adopt a child someday. I was surrounded by friends at church who adopted and/or did foster care, so the decision to one day adopt was quite natural for me. I eventually married. Once married, and finding that we were unable to have children of our own, our decision to adopt was an easy

one to make. Regardless of whether we had children of our own, we would still have adopted because we already felt led by God to do so.

My purpose had been there all along and I did not recognize it. My kids needed me more than ever. They were in a new country, with a new language and culture, and they had great emotional needs. They needed me at home. I was to raise the two children we adopted from Russia.

Once I was onboard with God's plan for my life, I found myself discussing our adoption experience with anyone who was interested. I was excited to help others on the journey of caring for kids in need. When I was asked to participate in the Orphan Ministry at church, I jumped at the chance to participate.

Today, I find myself thinking of ways we can best serve orphaned, abandoned or enslaved children. I am drawn to articles about the plight of AIDS orphans, homeless children, children who are bought and sold into slavery or are exploited in the sex trade industry, children who age-out of foster care and have no families or homes to go to - the list goes on. Through the Orphan Ministry, I can be a part of the solution to these challenges. I can live each day with purpose!



## WHAT'S YOUR CALLING?

- ☐ I don't know. > Proverbs 3:5-6
- ☐ I'm already doing it! > Galatians 6:9
- ☐ I'm not interested. > 1 John 2:17
- ☐ I want to start. > Romans 12:1-2



# I WANTED TO DIE

In 1972 I was finishing my junior year at Kent State. I found myself at a point in my life where I was asking the ‘deeper’ questions: “What is the purpose and meaning of life? Where did I come from? Why am I here and what will become of me when I die?”

I felt deep inside my heart there had to be an answer, but I wasn’t finding it anywhere.

That time period was the pinnacle of the hippie movement. I was never drawn into the drug subculture and all that went with it, but I was drawn to the philosophical side. People were de-emphasizing the material world and were focusing on the existential and spiritual side of life. I latched onto that and started my search. As a musician who had played in bands, I looked for an answer in music. Particularly groups like the *Moody Blues* whose lyrics addressed the same deep questions I had. But I found nothing that filled the emptiness in my heart. As a biology major I searched for an answer in nature, but again, nothing could fill the emptiness. The world at that time seemed to be spinning out of control, to the point of coming totally unraveled. After all, Barry McGuire recorded *The Eve of Destruction*, which said it all. I believed that my generation had the answer for the world’s ills. But when I witnessed the violence of the anti-war demonstrations at Kent in May 1970, I came away realizing that my generation was no different from any other. I was left with an utter sense of hopelessness. I had nothing to look forward to. No reason to have hope.

The result was that my hopelessness grew to the point that I had no desire to live anymore. I couldn’t escape the gnawing ache in my heart and I wanted to end it all. I wanted to die. I would dream of ways to take my own life, but I was always stopped by the thought of how it would hurt my family. I was terrified at the prospect of death and what was beyond the grave. I pictured myself floating in absolute darkness, all alone, and it scared me. I now know that I was being watched over and protected from myself, from doing something rash and foolish.

I was at my lowest point in the winter of 1972 when a friend in my dorm invited me to a meeting sponsored by *The Navigators*, a Christian campus ministry. I said I would go, not because I wanted to, but simply to be polite and not hurt his feelings. That decision changed my life forever. The meeting took place in one of the dorm lounges, so it was very informal. The speaker presented his message, most of which I don’t remember. But when he started talking about people who walk around like empty shells looking for the meaning of life, it was like he was talking directly to me. And then he said if you will ask Jesus Christ into your heart and life, He will fill that emptiness. At that point something clicked inside me. I was not a church person nor was I a praying person. But that night before I fell asleep, I prayed. I asked Christ to forgive me, and I asked Him to come into my life to fill the emptiness.

When I awoke the next morning, I knew something was different. Something had changed. I felt whole. I felt alive. I had a peace and a joy in the depth of my being

that couldn’t be explained. It was something beyond myself and I knew I had found what I was looking for. I didn’t announce to anyone what I had done, but as the days and weeks went by, my friends in the dorm said something was different about me. They could sense the transformation that had occurred. It was miraculous to say the least.

It has been almost 40 years and the

reality of God’s presence has never waned. He is with me now as He was on that morning when I awoke to a new life. I experienced what Jesus referred to in John chapter 3 as being ‘born again’. God gives you new life. You come alive inside.

You will find life that the world cannot offer. The Bible calls it eternal life. You can know why you are here and where you are going. And it’s all wrapped up in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the key. He is the answer and solution to the puzzle of life. If you will simply accept His offer of salvation and eternal life, you too can find what I found.



BRAD SUTTON

> Today, Brad Sutton lives in Colorado Springs, is an electronics technician and enjoys hiking in the mountains.

## HOW TO START FOLLOWING JESUS

### REPENT

The first and most obvious step toward following Jesus is turning toward Him. The Bible says that our sins – *the things we do that violate God’s moral laws* – are what separate us from a relationship with God. Ultimately, the consequence of breaking God’s laws is condemnation on Judgment Day. The Bible discusses this in detail in Revelation 20:11-15 and

21:3-8. So, to avoid this fate, we must admit to God what we’ve done wrong (confess our sins) and then let God take the lead in our lives.

### BELIEVE

John 3:16 explains, “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” Faith in Jesus means that instead of trusting in ourselves to “be good enough,” we freely admit to God that we need help. Jesus died on the Cross

as a substitute for us – He took the penalty that we rightfully deserved for breaking God’s laws. Then, He rose from the dead, securing a pathway for us, also, to overcome death. To receive this amazing gift of forgiveness and eternal life, the Bible says we must voice our faith in Jesus to save us. To learn more, look up Ephesians 2:1-10 and Romans 5:1-11.

### FOLLOW

Putting our faith in Jesus Christ is the first step on a lifelong journey of learning about and following Him. This process

involves studying the Bible, especially the words of Jesus, on a regular basis. We will start learning what it means to love people generously, extend forgiveness when we are hurt, compassionately serve those in need, keep ourselves pure from evil, and how to respond to God’s direction. Following Jesus will impact every area of our lives – family, work, future and character. Learn about this new life by reading Ephesians 4:17 through 6:20.



# REAL WORLD

NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, THE ROAD TO  
PURPOSE BEGINS IN THE SAME PLACE.

## THE STAY-AT-HOME MOM



Having come from a blue-collar small town, Elaine had aspirations of becoming the first in her family to go to college. After working hard through high school, she decided to serve others by becoming an RN. She was accepted into school, graduated in the top of her class, passed her exams, and was hired by a big city hospital. After years of hard work and long hours, she had gained the respect of her colleagues and took on a management position.

She got married to a doctor and decided to start a family. Their daughter was born, and, following a six-month maternity leave, Elaine returned to work. After months of juggling her work with day care, and the day-to-day tasks required at home, it became increasingly difficult for Elaine to keep up. Things at work and at home were being neglected or overlooked, and something had to be dropped from her schedule. Since they were situated well financially, it was decided that it was time for Elaine to leave the hospital and stay home as a full-time mom.

At first, Elaine enjoyed staying home with her daughter, but, after time, the day-to-day tasks became mundane and she began to question her decision to stay home. She wonders: *“Am I really happy? Is this it?”*

## THE LONELY SINGLE



Penny believes that love has passed her by. She has always been the bridesmaid, never the bride. She spends time at nightclubs, she goes to parties, she’s even tried some church singles’ mixers. But still, nothing. Her friends are getting married, many of them already have kids. And as Penny celebrated her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, she started wondering, “Was I meant to be alone?”

Along the way a few guys have taken an interest in her, but “the one” hasn’t shown up. Every “Mr. Right” she notices already has a ring on his finger. Her friends try to encourage her, but she’s grown tired of awkward introductions and blind dates. She’s tired of her switching her Facebook profile between “Single” and “It’s complicated.”

She just wants to be with someone. This isn’t the life she’d imagined for herself.

## THE UNFULFILLED DREAMER



Jerry always had aspirations to work in law enforcement. He saw this as a way to give purpose to his life, to “serve and protect” people, to better society, and to ultimately have people admire and respect him. He went to college majoring in Criminal Justice, studying hard, and graduating with honors.

Jerry applied to various law enforcement academies with high hopes, but the acceptance letters never arrived. After several rounds of applications, life’s reality set in. Being married with a child on the way, Jerry had to find a job to support his family – with the intention of pursuing his dream in the future. One year turned into two, two into four, and the then distant future became the present. He was in a dead-end job that no one dreams about having in their early twenties.

The words of Stephen Curtis Chapman’s song, “More To This Life,” had become his life:

“He takes care of his family, he takes care of his work, and every Sunday morning he takes his place at the church; and somehow he still feels a need to search, life just goes on.”

Even though Jerry’s life is okay and he loves his family, he still feels empty. Is he right to feel this way?





## THE DISAPPOINTED RETIREE

Steve always thought the American Dream included growing up in a loving home in the suburbs, graduating from college, getting married and having a family, finding a good job with a great company and staying with them till retirement. And basically, that's how things played out. As retirement grew closer, he and his wife started talking more about the next phase of life. They could move somewhere warmer. They could come back to visit the grandkids a few times a year.

So, after the retirement party, Steve had a busy first year of "freedom." He'd been looking forward to lazy days of walking hand-in-hand with his wife at the beach. He'd been looking forward to doing whatever he pleased, living with endless sunshine.

Saying 'goodbye' to family wasn't easy, but Steve knew he'd be back for important events, and the family would probably drive south to visit as well! The first few months were wonderful, exploring the new area and meeting new friends. Soon, however, things began to change. Steve wasn't having as much fun as he'd expected. He could only spend so much time shopping and eating out. Days began to drag, he and his wife talked about how much they missed their grandkids. Steve could fish any day he liked, but getting gear together and driving to some lake to stand by himself lost its appeal.

Steve began wondering: *"Did I miss the best part of my life? Am I going to be bored from here on out?"*



## THE COLLEGE GIRL

Alexa is nearing the middle of her sophomore year at college. She is thoroughly enjoying most of her classes, as well as the late night parties that are thrown at the notorious frat house on campus. Alexa is told numerous times that these will be "the best years of her life." Hearing those words increases her anxiety about the future. Alexa is an education major, but is already despairing about remaining in a classroom through her adult years. She wants to change her major, but even if she knew what she wanted to do, she is reluctant to face her successful parents, or to dole out additional funds for an unforeseen career. Alexa is struggling to find her purpose in life among friends who only care about the next party – *what is the point of it all?*



Plenty of people grapple with the real world questions illustrated in the stories of Alexa, Jerry, Penny, Steve and Elaine. While fictional, they aren't far from the reality most of us live each day. We struggle, push forward, spend money, try harder, keep people around us happy – for what?

## THE FIRST STEP IS THE SAME

Before the individual decisions of our lives make sense, and before we can really experience the fullness of joy in our circumstances, we have to determine what our ultimate purpose in life is. Why did God make us? What will it take for us to accomplish His mission for our lives?

Without this higher purpose involved, all our pursuits will feel empty. We'll keep asking, "Is this it?" We'll keep looking at the next stage of life as the key to our happiness – "when I get older, when I graduate, when I get a job, when I get married, when I buy my dream house, when I have kids, when the kids leave, when I retire, when I ...?"

Determining God's purpose involves two questions. First, "What is God's overall purpose for humanity?" Then, "Does God have something specific for me to do, based on my talents, resources, and per-

sonality?" Once we have the answer to the first question, the answer to the second will start to become clear. And then, wherever life takes us, we'll know why we are there, and we'll feel the satisfaction of living out our Creator's vision for life.

## YOUR REAL WORLD

### PART 1:

Ask a friend or family member to read the scenarios above and discuss.

- What would you advise Alexa to do? Who should she talk to for wisdom?
- Should Jerry go back and pursue a law-enforcement career? Why or why not?
- Is Penny right about being destined for loneliness?
- If you were in Steve's shoes, what would you do next?
- What could Elaine do to feel more fulfilled in her daily life?

### PART 2:

Tell your own story of life-direction and how you feel about your purpose today.

*Thanks to Katlyn Stephens, Jim Stephens, Sandy Bazemore, Dave Anderson and Cindy Anderson for contributing to this article.*



# HELPDESK



I AM CONFUSED ABOUT ORIGINS. IT SEEMS LIKE EVOLUTION IS WHAT SCIENTISTS BELIEVE.

First, you are correct to observe that human origins have everything to do with human purpose. If humanity has evolved by chance, “purpose” doesn’t exist. Accidents may perform “functions” in nature, but those functions cannot be construed as valuable. If there is no intention or intelligence behind the world, no value exists. Even our very existence is no more valuable than our non-existence. Obviously, at LifeChange, we believe that God created the world on purpose, for a purpose. His moral code forms the basis of how we perceive right and wrong, good and evil. Thus, a person’s life can be meaningful if that person lives for the purpose the Creator intended.

Second, not all scientists believe in evolution. Many embrace the fact that the Universe has obvious design, and that the most sensible explanation is that this design was put in place intentionally by an intelligent being. And, beyond that, there are many scientists who are Christians and believe the Bible’s account of human origins. *(For example, it was a chemistry professor from CSU who led the team that created this issue of LifeChange Magazine.)*

As you hear evolutionary theory discussed, consider: all scientists see the same natural evidence, but they interpret that evidence differently. If you would like to learn more about how scientists who believe in God interpret the evidence, we recommend the book, *In Six Days: Why Fifty Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*, by John Ashton. Two websites you can explore: [www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org) and [www.icr.org](http://www.icr.org).

I HAVE TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DECISION, AND FEEL STUCK. I DO NOT KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO.

The first and best advice is to start reading the Bible. Even if the Bible doesn’t have anything specific to say about your scenario (for example, what major to pursue in college or whether or not you should take early retirement), the principles of God’s Word will provide guidance for your life. We have found that the book of Proverbs, in particular, can aid with decision-making wisdom. If you want to know God’s will, open His Word.

Here is a practical process to help in making a specific decision:

1. List the pros and cons of the choices in front of you. Are there obvious positives or negatives pertaining to your spiritual life, family life, financial well-being or personal happiness? Sometimes making this list can be revealing.

2. Pray about each pro and con item you have written down. Ask for God’s wisdom to determine what His priorities for your life should be, and thus, which direction you should go.
3. Seek the counsel of a few wise friends, especially those with experience relevant to your decision. We also recommend calling a pastor or other church leader for advice, perspective and prayer. The Bible says that “there is safety in a multitude of counselors.”
4. Set a course of action, praying something like, “God, based on the information and the desires I have, I am proceeding with my plan to \_\_\_\_\_. If you want me to stop or to go a different direction, please make that amazingly clear. Otherwise, I am proceeding.” You might also pray about the following Bible verses: Proverbs 3:5-6 and Romans 12:1-2.

I AM A BEGINNER WHEN IT COMES TO BIBLE READING. HOW SHOULD I BEGIN?

To discover the purpose of life, you are right to be opening the Bible. At first, you may want to turn to the Gospel of John. It will provide you with a basic overview of Jesus’ life and teachings. Then, we’d recommend you read the book of James (for practical life-advice), the book of Ephesians (to understand God’s plan for your life) and then look for inspiration in the book of Psalms. Psalms is a large book, so a few key chapters to read first would include #’s 1, 8, 15, 19, 37, 119 and 145.

Some people find Bible reading difficult because of the old language used in classic Bibles. We recommend that beginners look at the *New Living Translation* (NLT) as a way to get started. It is written in simple, current-day English. If you don’t have a copy for yourself, the church can provide one, or you can locate one at almost any bookstore. There are other worthy translations that people use for study (NIV, NAS, KJV, etc.). Two online resources to be aware of: [BibleGateway.com](http://BibleGateway.com) provides free access to the Bible in a many different languages and translations; and *YouVersion* is a free app you can download to your

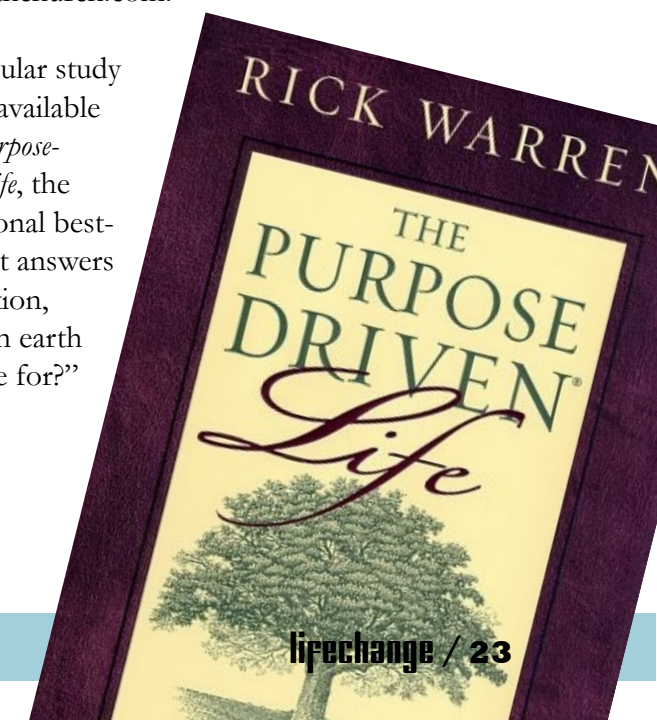
mobile device. *YouVersion* not only allows you to read the Bible, but also to set up reading plans and to access helpful study notes.

Finally, we highly recommend attending a Bible study or church service that emphasizes Bible reading and explanation. This will increase your understanding of God’s Word and also keep you motivated in your study. Our church (and many others in our area) offer Bible studies both on Sundays and in weekday home-groups. If you don’t have a church home of your own, we invite you to visit LifeChange/Weymouth this Sunday.

## YOUR PURPOSE-DRIVEN LIFE?

The LifeChange Team offers free Bible studies and book discussion groups regarding life’s purpose. Would you be interested? We have meeting options throughout the week at various times – to get more information about these or to sign up, call us at (330) 723-1750 or email [office@weymouthchurch.com](mailto:office@weymouthchurch.com).

One popular study we have available is *The Purpose-Driven Life*, the international best-seller that answers the question, “What on earth am I here for?”





# COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES



**Because God's work in our community is bigger than any one church, the LifeChange Team decided to check-in with other pastors from nearby churches, to ask about their perspective on life's purpose.**

**DOUG DAVIDSON**  
MEDINA COMMUNITY CHURCH  
medinacommunitychurch.org

I grew up in a religious home, but I was lost and far from the Lord. By my junior year of high school, I was convinced if I continued in the direction I was going, my life would be a mess. With brokenness I confessed everything to the Lord and asked Him to be my leader and forgiver. In faith, I began a relationship with Jesus Christ that has radically turned my life upside down. Instead of being lost, I found a purpose and direction for how to live life. Through God's Word I was given a model for how to do life. It is not always easy, but I have found that a relationship with my Creator is the best way to live life to its fullest. A verse that I have allowed the Lord to use in my life is Galatians 2:20:

"Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."



**REV. C.P. CARTER**  
SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH  
sbcmedina.org

I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior at the age of 9. I remember it clearly as that was a very emotionally significant time in my childhood. My father was tragically killed on June 4, 1977, followed by the death of my beloved grandmother on February 28, 1978. Even at 9 years of age, I was searching for the meaning of life. My understanding of being "a child of God" at that time brought me the "comfort" I was searching for, but I truly had no idea what it really meant to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The story did not change that much during my teen years. I "practiced" the Baptist faith of my family without question. After all, our family had been proud Baptists for generations. I graduated from college and accepted a position in academic affairs at a southern Presbyterian seminary. I was away from home and away from everything familiar. By God's grace and mercy, my faith deepened in ways I never realized it could.

Today I am Baptist by choice. There is no doubt that even at 9 years of age I loved the Lord. But at 44, I know why I love the Lord and I know without reservation that He loves me. I know what it means to have a "true" relationship with Jesus Christ. He is not only my Savior, He is my friend.



**JEFF KOLODZIEJ**  
CORNERSTONE CHAPEL  
cornerstonechapel.org

There is a scripture found in Matthew 10:8 where Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give." This principle in balance with another scripture has fortified the essence of my life and ministry. The other scripture I am referring to is found in Luke 12:48 which states, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required."

Let me use the illustration of an old time bucket brigade. During a fire, the people from nearby would gather in a line. One end of the line started at the lake, the other end close to the fire. They would pass buckets of water to each other until the water reached the fire. To find your purpose, take a good look at what you've been handed... and pass it along. God, by His grace, has given much to me in the way of redemption, forgiveness and grace, I mean *amazing* grace. I now have the privilege (actually, a mandate) to give it away.

I often times refer to my ministry as "a beggar telling other beggars where to get bread." I believe God has more for us all than we recognize or even ask Him to give us. Your purpose starts with and is limited to what you are willing and able to receive. Many refuse to ask for help and are thereby unwilling to help others. Others are proud and reject advice or counsel are therefore unable to give good instruction. If you need more, ask for more, and you'll have more to give.



**TED HALL**  
NEW LIFE  
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP  
newlifemedina.org

I grew up in church going to Sunday School, Youth Group, and Vacation Bible School but it really did not click with me until much later. It seemed to me that the things I was taught in school did not match what I was hearing from the church. I had questions and I didn't like the answers I was hearing. As a result, I spent many years away from church as a teenager and a young adult. I tried for a long time to do things my way instead of God's way. At a particularly low point in my life, when everything seemed to be falling apart, Jesus started to come back into the picture. It took a few years of making more mistakes and going down wrong paths, before I really started to get it. At one point I began to read the Bible for myself to see what the scriptures really had to say. Eventually my wife and I found ourselves in a church that preached straight from the Bible. We became a part of a community of believers that took the Scriptures seriously and tried to apply the teachings of Christ to our everyday lives. The more I knew about Jesus, the more I wanted to share what I was learning about Him with others. Jesus saved me. He has brought me peace, purpose, joy, fulfillment, and much more. I hope and pray for the same thing for you. There is true salvation in Jesus Christ.





**ROGER BIADA**  
BLACKBERRY RIDGE  
CHURCH  
blackberryridgerca.org

**TONY MYLES**  
CONNECTION CHURCH  
connectionchurch.org

**PETE RYDER**  
MEDINA CHURCH  
OF THE NAZARENE  
medinanazarene.org

I went to church as a kid, but never got much out of it...never thought much of it. After I went off to college, I adopted a pretty crazy and out-of-control lifestyle which would be my way of life for the next dozen or so years. During that time, I got married and had three children. The consequences of living in such a manner eventually caught up to me. I had plunged my family into serious financial troubles. We were on the verge of losing everything we had. The pressure that this put on my wife's and my relationship was pretty heavy.

Looking through the want ads one day, I saw a small add that said "Let Jesus untie the knots." I had plenty of knots, so I called the number. A recorded message explained to me my need for a Savior and how Christ had died on the cross out of His love for me. The man who had made the recording invited me to ask Christ into my life as my Lord and Savior. I prayed along with the recording.

That phone call was the start of a radical transformation in my life, my wife coming to Christ two years later, rebuilt finances and many years in ministry. God has been faithful.

I remember that it later felt like I broke some rules without knowing it. As a teenager wearing a backward-facing baseball hat and ripped blue jeans, I entered a church building without realizing where I was. My past religious experiences usually involved an occasional Sunday religion where I dressed up to "give God my best," but that night I listened to the most practical teaching I'd ever heard that ended with a prayer. When I finally realized I was taking part in a church experience, I began to experience a false guilt that I should have worn something nicer.

Yet somehow in that atypical multi-purpose space I learned about God's atypical multi-purpose love for me. Maybe that's why the aesthetics stand out, because to this day I'm broken about how much time we waste managing our masks with God even though He desires an exposed relationship with us. Wouldn't it be something if we all embraced a fully-alive life in Jesus Christ and helped others do the same?

Jesus "ruined" my life that day, and I'm so glad He did. I saw through the game of appearance-based Christianity, and I couldn't go back to playing it. Eventually I received Him as my Savior, started to learn what it meant to make Him my Lord, and gave the direction and details of my life to redemptively loving others into a deeper connection with God. Care to join me?

When I started college, my two main objectives were to play soccer and have fun. I got decent grades, but wasn't thinking much past the next game or the next class. Most of my friends were "Business" majors, so I figured I'd head in that direction too. I was doing pretty well in 'Accounting' and 'Econ 101,' but a couple years in I wasn't real sure where I was going with it all. It was then that I had an encounter with God that changed my life. I was challenged by some people around me to really think about where my life was heading and how God wanted to use me. I had gone to church my whole life, but wasn't really following Him. It wasn't easy, but as I listened to some key people, read the Bible, and prayed, I made the commitment to follow God completely with my life. And before it was all said and done, I sensed God calling me into the ministry.

That was over 20 years ago, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I had been aimlessly following the crowd, not concerned with where I was heading. But God had a plan for me, and has confirmed it over and over again. His plans are always best!



## MOVIE REVIEW: Soul Surfer (2011)

Gay Frantz

Soul Surfer is a true-story movie about a teen-aged competitive surfer, Bethany Hamilton (AnnaSophia Robb). Bethany is a naturally-talented surfer living on the beautiful Hawaiian Island coast of Kauai. In her words, she was "born to surf" and had taken to the waves at the young age of three. Trained by her father, Tom (Dennis Quaid), Bethany began competing in the National Surfing Competition, until one morning she lost her left arm when she was attacked by a 14-foot tiger shark. Her faith helped her to remain calm throughout the ordeal and led to her miraculous survival.

While recovering, she had to face the nagging questions about her shattered future dreams. Why did this happen? Why did she have to lose everything she held dear? Would she ever be able to ride the surf again? What was her worth? Most importantly, could she ever be happy again?

After the devastating 2004 tsunami in the Pacific Ocean, her church organized a mission trip to devastated Phuket, Thailand. Reluctant to go on the trip, she was encouraged to go by her youth group leader, Sara Hill (Carrie Underwood). Sara

assured Bethany that God would find His use for her. In Phuket, Bethany had a life transforming experience as she witnessed the devastation left by the tsunami. Children were left homeless, without parents and near starvation, and she felt she could relate to their losses. This profoundly changed her whole perspective on life. The children on the island had suffered devastating losses. Through her surfing skills, she was able to encourage them not to give up, and Bethany found a renewed sense of hope and direction.

Returning home, her father and mother (Helen Hunt) helped to strengthen and encourage her not to give up her dreams. Bethany resolved to conquer her own fears and limitations. With prayer and determination, she faced the demons that plagued her. She made the bold decision to return to the surfing world, and, with just one arm, won worldwide acclaim.

## LEARNING MORE ABOUT PURPOSE: RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### MOVIES

*Courageous* (2011) is a captivating movie about four police officers that, while fighting crime, must learn how to be courageous fathers when their children need them the most. For dads especially, this movie is a life-changer. (Sherwood Pictures)

*October Baby* (2011) highlights the adventure of a young woman who was shocked to learn that she was actually adopted – after surviving a failed abortion. "Every life is beautiful."

### ON THE WEB

[www.AnswersInGenesis.org](http://www.AnswersInGenesis.org) is a great resource regarding the purpose of life, particularly as it relates to our origin as human beings. Without knowing where we came from, it is difficult to know where we should be going!

[www.CreationMuseum.org](http://www.CreationMuseum.org) will transport you to a world full of wonder and purpose – the site provides all the information you need to plan a family trip to the Cincinnati-area attraction that will upgrade your thinking about the origin and reason for life.

**FOR KIDS** Spark some discussion in your home about life's purpose by reading *The Oak Inside the Acorn* by Max Lucado, and watching *VeggieTales: It's a Meaningful Life* and *VeggieTales: The Princess and the Popstar*.

### BOOKS

*Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis is a tried-and-true classic. It offers an academic defense of the Christian faith and how it relates to the purpose of life, overcoming evil, and knowing God.

*The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren is an international best-seller that offers forty devotional readings in answer to the question, "Why am I here?"

*A Well-Lived Life* by Chuck Swindoll is for the person who is burdened with a sense of failure in his/her Christian life. Swindoll says we "can leave the shackles of second-guessing behind forever and embrace God's grace with a life well lived."

*Do Hard Things: A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations* by Alex and Brett Harris challenges teens to live a more purposeful life.

*I'm Not Wonder Woman, But God Made Me Wonderful* by Sheila Walsh is an encouraging read for women who are struggling to keep everything organized, who are trying to "be perfect," and who feel like their lives are a big run-around.







**A**thletes from around the world converge on a given city; flags of nations parade through stadiums, courts, and fields; millions from across the world tune in to catch glimpse of glory; the Olympics are really quite spectacular. They are unique moments in the world's affairs, times when nations come together in a spirit of good will and spirited competition.

Viewers are treated to stats and scores, names and faces, winners and losers. History is made, and stars rise to the top, carrying home gold and silver medals in the name of their countries.

To win in the Olympics takes discipline. It takes *resolve*. To win takes sacrifice and pain. But when the flag is raised and the anthem is trumpeted, all the years of hard work are rewarded with a single moment of glory.

Most people hate discipline. The thought of Olympians jumping out of bed at four in the morning ready to run laps, workout at the gym, and meet with a trainer makes our couch-lounging bodies cringe. But deep down, we wish we could do what Olympians do. And in our own lives, whatever our pursuit, we wish we could “win the gold.”

The Apostle Paul was a fan of athletics, and even referenced Olympic-style competition in the Bible. He spoke of a victory crown greater than earthly medals: “Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.” (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

Paul saw sporting events as an illustration of spiritual life. Each of us has a “personal race” to which God has called us. He knew this race to fulfill God’s purpose would take discipline; he knew it would take focus and resolve.

The reward for a “gold-medal life” is far greater than a gold medal, as the verse reveals, “we do it for an eternal prize.”

## SO HOW CAN I LIVE A GOLD MEDAL LIFE?

Fulfilling God’s purpose isn’t some heroic endeavor reserved only for an elite class of spiritual power-lifters. It doesn’t take exceptional abilities to answer God’s call, but it does take exceptional effort. We can’t run aimlessly or half-heartedly and expect to receive a prize.

Living a gold medal life begins with a simple commitment to God: “I want to fulfill your purpose, Lord. Help me discover what you want me to do.” That statement can transform a person’s life. But words alone don’t win medals. The decision to enter the race is only the beginning - the finish line is yet to come.

Spiritual discipline is challenging, perhaps even more so than physical discipline; saying “no” to temptations, taking steps to know God better, investing time at church, reading the Bible, serving others faithfully, and setting aside our own agenda to accomplish God’s objectives.

Living a gold medal life isn’t easy. You can’t retire. You can’t take a week off. Like an aspiring Olympian, you have to give it your all. At the end of the day, however, faithful runners in life’s race will receive a reward far greater than anything this world has to offer.

## HEAVENLY REWARDS

*The Bible promises that those who follow Jesus Christ will be rewarded for their service upon entrance to heaven.*

For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. – 2 Cor. 5:10

The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’ – Mt. 25:23

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or

crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. – Rev. 21:3-7

Peter said, “We’ve left our homes to follow you.” “Yes,” Jesus replied, “and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, will be repaid many times over in this life, and will have eternal life in the world to come.”

– Lk. 18:28-30



# DEVELOPING YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR A LIFE OF PURPOSE

Based on the things you’ve learned in this issue of *LifeChange Magazine*, write your own answers to the questions below, to organize your thoughts about the purpose of life.

## WHY I AM HERE

God made me because\_\_\_\_\_

Some of the specific things God expects me to do:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Up to this point in my life, I have prayed:*

- ☐ Almost never
- ☐ On special occassions / meals
- ☐ Regularly
- ☐ Daily

*The current temperature of my love for God:*

- ☐ Cold, no love
- ☐ Cool, I’m interested
- ☐ Warm, I care about God
- ☐ Hot, He is everything to me

*My study of the Bible has been:*

- ☐ Little or nothing
- ☐ Just at church
- ☐ An occasional reading
- ☐ A daily commitment

*My relationship with God is:*

- ☐ Unknown, I don’t really know what to do  
(Read Ephesians 2:1-10 and John 3:16-21)
- ☐ Distant, I’ve walked away from God  
(Read Luke 15:11-32, Revelation 3:15-21)
- ☐ Growing, I’m new at all of this  
(Read 2 Peter 1:3-11)
- ☐ Hypocritical, I know my faith is weak  
(Read Revelation 3:1-6, James 1:19-27)
- ☐ Alive, I have faith in God and obey Him daily  
(Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21)

Things I’ve already done to help fulfill the purpose of my life:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any activities, relationships, attitudes or habits that are hindering me from fulfilling my purpose in life?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In my life today, these are the individuals I could talk to about my purpose in life – people with spiritual insight who would help me make the right decisions and who would encourage me forward:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(If you don’t know many people who could do this, someone from the LifeChange Team could have this kind of discussion with you, either in-person or on the phone. Call us at (330) 723-1750 to set something up. Think of it as a purpose-in-life consultation!)

## WHAT I AM SUPPOSED TO DO

Write your next-step goal for the following areas of life. “My vision for my \_\_\_\_\_ is…” Obviously, your objectives will change over time. But writing your intentions down will help you see what you need to start doing today to best complete your life mission.

Marriage

Children

Job / Business

Personal Ministry

Church Involvement

Education

Spiritual Life

Finances

Future

Now, in the shaded area by each statement, write down one action step you could take in the next month to get closer to fulfilling your objective. Share these ideas with a friend or family member who can give you advice and hold you accountable to follow through. Your life’s purpose won’t be fulfilled unless you take initiative! Why wait another day?

Say a prayer to God regarding your purpose in life, and your intention to fulfill it from this day on.





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Non-profit  
U.S. Postage  
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TIRED OF THE  
RAT RACE?

CHASING THE  
POINTLESS?

FIND

TRUE

PURPOSE.

