

“DESIGNED WITH AND FOR A PURPOSE—A GOD-GIVEN ONE!”
by Rom A. Pegram (8/21/16)

It's been said that 'life just doesn't make sense without God' ... and I tend to agree with that. Just listen to these verses from God's word, as we begin this time together—from the Apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus (Eph. 1:11, MSG). Paul tells them...

“It is in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for a glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.”

And then (Col. 1:16b, MSG) ... **“Everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him.”**

Folks, God's word teaches us many things about our design ... and how our design has ultimate, eternal purposes. Listen now to our first *main* scripture for today—just one verse, where the prophet Isaiah speaks to God's people (Is. 26:3, NLT):

“You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!” – Isaiah 26:3 (NLT)

I believe there is in every one of us a desire for our lives to have a real purpose, a deep meaning, and to count for something! So questions haunt us, like ... “How should I be living my life?” and “What should I do with my life?” or even “Is there suppose to be more to my life than this?” But, we soon discover that *no matter how much we focus on ourselves, there are really no answers there...*

Dr. Hugh Moorhead—philosophy professor at Northeastern Illinois University—once wrote to 250 of the best known philosophers, scientists, writers and intellectuals in the world ... and asked them this: **“What is the meaning of life?”**

He then published their responses in a book. Some offered their best guesses, some admitted they had just created their own purpose for life, and others were honest enough to say they were clueless. In fact, a number included in their responses a request for Dr. Moorhead to let *them* know, if *he* ever discovered the purpose for life...

CS Lewis says that what these 250 scientists were doing ... is also one of *our* options—**SPECULATION!** Our purpose could come from an intellectual stab in the dark ... but *it will not satisfy; it will not give us peace.* Fortunately there's an alternative to *speculation* when it comes to the purpose and meaning of life; it's called ... **REVELATION**—what God has revealed in his **WORD** about life! *Isn't it a smart thing to ask the Creator of the invention the purpose of it?* What's our life all about? Ask God!

Folks, *God has not left us lost in the darkness to wonder and guess!* God has given us a great deal of information and experience ... if we have the desire to check it out! What

you and I have to decide is this: “Are we are willing to listen to what God’s word says?” If you are, then 1 Corinthians 2:7 makes three bold assertions: Let’s look at our next key verse right now...

“God's wisdom is something mysterious that goes deep into the interior of his purposes. You don't find it lying around on the surface. It's not the latest message, but more like the oldest—what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us, long before we ever arrived on the scene.” – 1 Corinthians 2:7 (MSG)

So, here’s what we discover through Paul’s words to the Corinthian church...

1. You discover your identity & purpose *through a relationship with Jesus Christ...*
2. God had you in mind long before you ever thought of Him...
3. The purpose of one’s life fits into a much larger, cosmic purpose that God has designed for eternity...

I believe people have to come to the realization that WITHOUT GOD LIFE MAKES NO SENSE. For many this means they exhaust other alternatives ... like Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, who grew up being taught there is no God. Andrei lived being taught there was no God, feeling there was no God, believing there was no God. On a train trip during which he found himself emotionally miserable, a thought came to him from out of his darkness – “without God life doesn’t make sense!.” These words caught him off-guard. Where did they come from? After all, he’d been isolated from such thinking, sterilized of everything spiritual. Andrei came to believe what, supposedly, he had been protected from his whole life – *a faith in God who gave him purpose!*

Rick Warren says one of the best ways for us to think about this ourselves is to ask: “How do you see your life?” People will answer this in so many different ways, saying life is: A circus ... a minefield ... a deck of cards ... a puzzle ... a roller coaster ... a journey ... a symphony ... a dance ... a play in which you get to play but one part; the list could go on & on...

If I asked you to come up with a metaphor, what would yours be today? This would be your life metaphor, your view of life—what you want to give, what you want to do, how you will live... Things like clothes, jewelry, tattoos, and bumper stickers are all various expressions of this. Here’re some examples of what I’m talking about:

- *If you see life as a party ... your primary value in life will be **fun**...*
- *If you see life as a race, your primary value will be **speed**...*
- *If you value life as a marathon, you will value **endurance**...*
- *If your life is a battle or a game, **winning** will be a core value...*

So, what’s your view of life? Pastor Rick Warren warns us ... it could be based on a *faulty metaphor!* Then *he makes a statement I find to be key:* “To fulfill the purposes that God has made for you, you’ll have to challenge conventional wisdom (metaphors) & replace them with biblical metaphors of life!” Scripture says (Rom. 12:2, NLT), “Don’t

copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Scripture also gives us at least *three metaphors to teach God's view of life*. Life is a test... Life is a trust... Life is a temporary assignment... So let's start with the first one:

LIFE IS A TEST. In God's word, we find many, many examples of *testing*... God tests people's knowledge, their loyalty, their love, their intentions, and their direction. Here are some examples:

- *God tested Abraham* ... asking him to sacrifice his own son...
- *God tested Adam and Eve* ... placing them in the midst of forbidden fruit...
- *God tested Joshua* ... asking him to have 12 men step into the river Jordan with the ark containing His word...
- *God tested David* when he told him to take on Goliath with his sling & five smooth stones...

You and I are tested, too—through people, situations, conflicts, tragedies, successes, disappointments, opportunities, and illness; even the simplest of things—opening a door, picking up a piece of trash, being polite to a server in a restaurant ... *could all be tests!*

The truth is, we don't know all the tests God may send our way ... but we do get an idea of what they may be from the Bible. We'll be tested by major changes, delayed promises, impossible problems, conflict, illness, undeserved criticism, unanswered prayers, and even what seem like senseless tragedies! Warren speaks to this from his own life, when he says: "I have noticed that God *tests my faith* through problems, *tests my hope* by how I can handle possessions, *tests my love* through people."

And, folks, here is a tidbit of wisdom about God's testing us in life: **How we live when God draws away ... leaves us alone to live *his way!*** Hezekiah found this out: Hezekiah walked with God ... but at a critical point in his life God left him alone to test his character, to reveal a weakness, and to prepare him for more responsibility. And, God may do the same with us at some point!

When we come to realize life is a test, we then realize that nothing in life is insignificant! The smallest little thing ... may be a huge opportunity to deepen our character! I just read the other day that, contrary to what we like to be concerned with, *God's main concern is not our comfort; it's our character!* So, these tests may determine the difference between growing in our faith or our faith dwindling at some point! The GOOD NEWS, however, is ... *God wants us to pass our tests!* He'll provide resources, helps and words for us to pass every single test. Also,

LIFE IS A TRUST. Our time on earth, our relationships, our skills, our opportunities—they're all gifts from God that we've been entrusted with. We're managers—really *stewards*—of all God's given us...

You know, *right here is where we can really be tested!* We prefer to own rather than be responsible for a trust. *The idea that God just loans the world to us while we're here ... doesn't set well with many of us.* We'd rather think in terms of deeds and titles; we like thinking about our name being attached to things...

God's idea of life, however, is this: *Take care of it even though you don't own it.* People today are much more inclined to think: "I don't own it; I don't have to take care of it!" That's a "renters" attitude ... isn't it?

We're also talking about *an attitude of entitlement* ... rather than a lifestyle of caretaking and sharing. "Because God owns it, I'll do my best to take care of it and *share* it." *That's God's way!* It's like the Kingdom of God scripture describes; in the end ... we'll be evaluated & rewarded according to how we handled this 'trust' called life. *Finally...*

LIFE IS A TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT. Psalm 119:9 (NLT) says, "Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered, and that my life is fleeing away." We are 'temps'; did you know that? None of us should feel for a moment that we have anything in this life that is permanent – *everything is temporary!*

When I think of the real difference between what's temporal and eternal, *I can't understand why we live like the opposite is true!* People generally seem to live like ... *this earth is eternal and heaven is temporary!* It's all where you place the emphasis, isn't it?

Please, please, please ... as you think about this ... *don't forget the word "assignment!"* We've been asked ... and we are *expected* to do the work Jesus began! We're assigned to accomplish God's Will—*that all should become disciples of Jesus Christ!* There's the purpose of the Church! But ... we are not *en-titled*; rather, we're *titled* to serve ... during our days here on earth ... and beyond!!!!!!

During these next few weeks, please take the time to ask yourself: "What drives my life?" Most people are driven by things like fear, guilt, resentment, anger, materialism, and the need for approval...

In contrast, during these next few weeks, I want to show you how to live a *purpose driven life*—a life controlled, guided and directed by God's purposes. And nothing in this life can or will compensate for *not* knowing God's purposes for YOU! Without purpose ... you and I have a *life without meaning, activity without direction, events without reason, and a future without hope!* We don't need that, do we? *Stick with me for the next few weeks, and you'll discover these benefits of Purpose: It...*

1. Gives meaning to your life...
2. Helps simplify your life...
3. Helps you to focus on what's eternally important in life...
4. Helps to motivate your life in positive ways... and...
5. Helps to prepare you for what's ahead—eternity...

Do you want 'perfect peace' in your life ... as God's word promises? It's found in *God's* purposes...