

How do you have a life of purpose?

Philippians 1:20, ***"It is my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."***

Paul lived out God's purpose - whether he lived or died, he had one passion - magnify Jesus! Paul's delight, and his aim, were to make the surpassing value of Jesus so obvious to everyone around him. This overarching purpose allows us to approach the painful and mundane details of life with joy! Keep in mind what joy really is. It's not happiness, but it's the choice to be content no matter what the circumstances. It's the choice to make Jesus the primary delight in your life, and when He is, life can't rattle your faith! That's joy!

Consider that the average person spends 70,000 hours at work in his life. Too many people lack joy and purpose in their daily work. But even the difficult or mundane parts of your day are an opportunity! Let's look at a real scenario where this is lived out to the full. In Acts 16:22-30, Paul and Silas (a partner in ministry) are prisoners ministering to an unbelieving jailer.

Acts 16:22-30, ***"The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"***

Details Matter

Paul and Silas are arrested for their faith; stripped and beaten severely. Then, thrown into the inner portion of the prison, the dungeon where there was no heat or light. Bleeding and half-naked, they had their feet chained to the wall. For anyone, this would be a cause to lose hope, shake their fist at God, cuss out the guards, etc. Paul & Silas however found their delight in Jesus, so much so that outward circumstances couldn't deter their faith. This was so evident that the desire of their heart was to praise the Lord and worship Him late into the night; they couldn't contain their joy! Consider the impact this had on the other inmates! The Lord had an agenda, and a supernatural event proceeded. The earth shook, which could be explained away as natural, but ALL of the chains on ALL of the inmates fell off; a miracle! So, the obvious question is, ***"Why didn't the inmates escape when they had the chance?"*** The answer is simple. The inmates knew they were experiencing something so genuine, something so Godly, and they had been so moved by the faith of Paul and Silas, especially in a hopeless environment like jail, that they would rather stay and experience God than have worldly freedom. In short, satisfaction in Jesus is greater than anything the world can offer. Next, the jailer, knowing that he'd be executed if an inmate escapes, assumed the worst and prepares to take his own life in order to avoid the humiliation of answering to his superiors. But wait, God intervenes. God supernaturally prompted Paul to cry out to the jailer, as Paul had no other way of knowing what the jailer was about to do, and assured the man that no inmate had escaped, and to not harm himself. Upon hearing this news, the jailer called for lights/torches to be lit and sure enough the inmates were all present, and in awe themselves. The obvious goodness of the Lord, sparing this man's life, led the jailer to beg, ***"What must I do to be saved?"*** You see, when we live out our faith, it attracts others to Jesus!

Imagine if roles were reversed and the jailer was the Christian. It would make sense that the Christian jailer would speak hope and encouragement daily as he ministers to the discouraged and hopeless inmates. After all, a Christian jailer is free; goes home each day, eats what he wants, vacations, wears warm comfortable clothes, etc. It would seem obvious that compared to the inmates, the jailer had a reason to be calm and joyful. However, here, the inmate was the Christian! Why is Paul joyful? Not because of his circumstances, but despite them. He's joyful because of who he is in Christ! Could you be joyful as an inmate? The choice is yours.

No circumstance exists that puts joy out of reach! No circumstance exists that puts glorifying God out of reach!

- A common strategy of Satan; he perverts truth and tries to rob Christians of their joy. He tempts us to fixate our mind on ungodly possibilities, ungodly reasons that bad things happen, ungodly mundane purposes in life. A mundane life might be working all day, getting paid, paying bills, eating, sleeping – repeating! That’s what Satan wants you to fixate on. *“WHAT’S MY PURPOSE?”* He wants to rob you of joy.

Isaiah 43:6–7, ***“Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and made.”***

- God created you, me, and everything for His glory. This is our overarching purpose!

1 Corinthians 10:31, ***“Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.”***

- The Apostle Paul is saying that even the mundane things in life, like taking a drink of water, should be made purposeful! How would your life change if you made the mundane purposeful? If this Scripture feels like merely a duty, then we’ve missed the point.

Matthew 5:16, ***“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”***

- Choosing to live a life of kingdom purpose draws attention upward and attracts people to the Lord! Is your life making Him famous?

John 15:8, ***“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.”***

- Fruit is the evidence or result of a life that is being led by the Lord. When He is alive and working through you, governing your decisions, then you prove to be His disciple! This should be the aim of every Christian alive today. This doesn’t just happen though, be default, simply because a person is saved. This happens by the daily choice to say, *“God, I’m available! Glorify Yourself in and through me. Use me for Your kingdom purposes!”*

Pastor John Piper has a great ministry and often speaks of what he calls *“Christian Hedonism”*. Hedonism is the pursuit of one’s own satisfaction. But, as a Christian, Mr. Piper says that Christian Hedonism is that God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him. When Christ is the pursuit of our satisfaction, we are indeed most satisfied!

Living with purpose gives direction for how to pray, how to meditate, how we pursue God.

- How is our prayer life? *“Father, do Your great purpose! Glorify Your great name in me! Do your will! Build Your kingdom through me! You are the center! Make it happen in me, Oh Lord!”* It’s easy to let habits and patterns cost us days, weeks, months, without praying, *“Father, glorify yourself in me,”*

Steps to Building Joy in Christ

1. Pray that the Lord would increase your joy. Psalm 90:14, ***“O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.”***
2. Choose to pursue Him. Jeremiah 29:13, ***“You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.”*** And, James 4:8, ***“Come near to God and He will come near to you.”***
3. Delight yourself in the Lord and walk in obedience. Psalm 37:4-5, ***“Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it.”*** As your delight in the Lord increases, He gives you the desires of your heart. Not the object of your heart’s desire, but the actual desire itself. Meaning, He causes you to want things that you didn’t used to want. And, once you act in those wants by obeying Him and praying for those new desires, then they come to pass. Prayers are getting answered because you’re now praying in alignment with God. Life suddenly is so much more satisfying and purposeful!