

God Has a Plan & Purpose for my Life! Psalm 57:1-3

A former New Zealander of the Year knighted in 2011, Sir Ray Avery continues to make the news. He is recently quoted as saying, "Everyone starts life with about 30,000 days. By the calculation I have 4795 left to make a difference. I've come up with this plan in the time I have left."

Every morning this 70 year old wakes up he is a man on a mission. His life's purpose is raise money to help save babies around the world. \$4 million in fact is the amount needed to make 2000 of the Lifepods he designed, at \$2000 each of which would save 50 lives over the 10 years it remained operational. That's a million babies. He's spent the last 10 years developing his incubators for premature babies in third world countries that would otherwise die without one. He intends to make his last 10 years count beginning with a Live Aid type concert at Eden Park next Waitangi day to raise funds and will mark on each Life Pod not his own name or the name of his company but this - 'A gift from the people of New Zealand'... "This country is well known for the All Blacks but not so well known for our innovation. This is a chance to leave a lasting mark on the world, from Kiwis." "What I'm asking is for everyone in New Zealand to step up and make a difference. There can be no better project than saving the lives of babies — a gift from New Zealand to the world."

But not everyone wakes up with the passion, vision drive and the great life fulfilling purpose that Ray Avery does. For such people... Waking up feeling purposeless is incredibly frustrating. You look around and see your friends, coworkers and Ray living passionate, engaged, meaningful lives. They have deep relationships, rewarding jobs and a sense of direction that compels them to hop out of bed each morning with a spring in their step- then there's you. You know that God has something good in store for you. You don't believe the LORD intends you to live a life of painful drudgery in which each day is a total drag. After all, the Bible is full of passages about joy. While this certainly doesn't mean that every single day is a party celebration, it does mean that an overall sense of joy and gladness should permeate your life.

[Knowing God as one who'll answer] **David in Psalm 57:2** wrote, *"I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me."* This is key in understanding God's purpose for your life. God has numbered your days and will fulfill every purpose He has for you.

I need to point out that in one sense, you are *always* living in God's purpose. God is God who works all things, including your life, according to his purposes. Nothing can happen without God ordering it. However, our choices and actions also really matter. In some ways, this is a mystery we can't fully understand, but that doesn't mean it's not true. We can choose to do things that will bring us more joy and give us more of a sense of purpose... I want to help you identify those choices you can make to bring more enthusiasm and God-given purpose into your life.

5 Signs that you don't have much Purpose in your Life.

1. You're Blatantly Living in Sin - Starting with the most obvious one. If you're blatantly disobeying God's Word, Christ's teachings, you're not living in God's purpose and you will certainly experience a sense of emptiness in your life. This one is straightforward so we don't need to spend too much time here- just repent and move on!

2. You lack Joy and Excitement – If you wake up every day filled with apathy or dread or total boredom, you're probably not doing what you were meant to do. God has created you uniquely, has really good things planned for you and one of the fruits of the Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22). Sure, there will be difficult things you encounter that require patience and persistence, but overall you should have a sense of joy and peace that fills your days, your work and your relationships... **Ecclesiastes 8:15** says, "And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun." So, would you say that this kind of joy characterises your life and work? If not, you may need to rethink where you're headed – if...

3. You Don't Feel much fulfilment in Life – If you go about your days experiencing little fulfillment, you may be wandering from your God-given purpose. Fulfillment comes from doing rewarding, meaningful, purposeful things. From a job or role that taps into your skills and passions. From a relationship perspective, that involves giving and receiving, beginning with spouse and family. From interests that are invigorating instead of mind-numbing. Yes, in life you'll have to do certain things that are boring and unfulfilling but if your entire life is like this, you probably need a change.

4. You Feel Stuck – If you desperately want a change but also feel totally stuck in your life, that's almost *certainly* a sign that

you're not walking according to God's purpose. Those who are stuck want to go in a particular direction but don't know how to get there. So they spin their wheels, feeling endlessly frustrated but unsure of how to make the frustration end. Do you feel trapped like this? [N.B. I am not including marriage or family in this thought.]

5. Having no/You Have no direction –

If you don't know God's purpose for your life, you constantly feel a sense of aimlessness. You feel as though you're wandering from thing to thing without any forward progress. Nothing excites you and you don't have any specific goals you're working toward. Unlike the Israelites, who wandered for 40 years yet still had a goal (the Promised Land), you don't even have a goal in front of you. In "The Lord of the Rings" J.R.R. Tolkien wrote this line in a poem, "Not all who wander are lost." The same applies to you. Even though you feel like you're wandering without any true purpose, that doesn't mean you're lost. You can regain your sense of purpose and discover what God has for your life.

Here are 7 ways to Discover God's purpose for your life:

1. **Go to God in Prayer-** Again, let's start with the obvious. If you feel purposeless, ask God to give you wisdom-direction. **James 1:5** states, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." That's incredibly good news. God *wants* to give you a purpose. God wants to bestow divine wisdom on you. It's not like God is holding out on you in order to make you miserable. God desires you to have a joyful, ambitious, purposeful life. Ask God for purpose and expect Him to give it to you.

2. The second most obvious thing you can do is to **Dig into God's Word** - The primary way God speaks to us is through the Bible. This means that one of the first things you should do in your search for God's purpose is to start digging into scripture. Now, you won't find any verses that tell you to become a carpenter, baker, butcher or dance instructor, but you will begin to understand the heart of God. **Psalms 119:105** says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." God's word brings light to paths that otherwise seem dark. In the Bible you learn how to live wisely in God's world, which is the first step toward finding your purpose.

3. **Determine you gifts and strengths** - God has given you very specific gifts and strengths. Maybe you're a cooking whiz or a wise

counsellor. Maybe you have a mind for electronics or business. Maybe you're great at organising people and getting things done. God's purpose for you probably involves building on the things you're already good at, your strengths. Maybe it's time for you to (re) discover your God-given spiritual gifts and then determine how you're going to use them through a Spiritual Gifts Seminar.

4. Determine your passions

What is one thing you're particularly passionate about?

This can be anything. Children, Youth, the Elderly, Business, art, alleviating poverty, mechanics, advocating for others, whatever. I ask you, if money wasn't an issue, what would you love to do? Determining your passions often helps you figure out what God has called you to do. It's often said that God works at the intersection of our gifts and our passions. Where do your gifts meet your passions? That may be God's purpose for you.

5. Bring Others into your Life - Proverbs 11:14 says, *"Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety."* In other words, one of the main ways God will help you find your purpose is through others. Your counselors should be people you *trust* and not just friends who will try and please you by telling you what they think you want to hear. Whether this is your teachers, parents or friends, it needs to be people who have your best interests at heart. You want wise counselors to help you find God's purpose for you.

6. Set aside a time for Reflection – Sometimes it can be incredibly helpful to take some unhurried time to think, pray and even journal. A retreat you might call it. You don't have to spend a week in the bush or a Monastery for this to be effective. Even just an hour, a half or whole day away from the hustle and grind can be hugely rewarding. During these times of Reflection, allow yourself to simply be still. To ponder. To ask God for direction and listen for His voice. This doesn't need to be complicated and doesn't require any elaborate rituals. **Hebrews 11:6** is a reminder that God *always* rewards those who seek him. The LORD's not hiding in the dark, trying to keep his will hidden from you. He wants to guide you.

7. In the End Trust God. Trying to discover your life purpose can be a stressful, overwhelming thing. It can seem like such a large, confusing, frustrating subject. You want to move forward, but you're not sure how. You want to find your purpose, but you feel

like you're aimlessly wandering. But you can trust God to lead you where God wants you to go. As **Psalm 23:2-3** says, *"He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."* You may feel confused, but God doesn't.

God's plan and purposes are concepts that flow through the entire Bible. There is nothing random or spontaneous about our God and how God works for He is purposeful in all things. God's kingdom is fuelled by those who tap into the purpose that God has for them. It is when they understand that their story is part of a much bigger story, God's story, and this great insight becomes their guiding light. Perhaps the greatest verse in the Bible on the subject of God's will is this one: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"* **Jeremiah 29:11**.

Consider what that one verse means for your life -

God has a plan perfectly formulated with your name on it.
 It's a good plan. God didn't create you to be miserable, but to be fruitful. God has reserved for you a future filled with hope because:
 God's plan was written long before you were born. (Jeremiah 1:5)
 God's plan for you is bound up with his plans for others. Rom 8:28)
 God's plan is built upon your gifts and talents. (Ephesians 2:10)
 God's eternal purpose brings together your plan with those of others. (Proverbs 16:9)
 God will guide you as you attempt to follow his will. (Proverbs 16:3)

The challenge remains for us to stay as close to the Lord as we can, immersing ourselves in his Word and the flow of the Holy Spirit every day. Focus on God's purposes, and ask him what he wants you to do. Throughout the course of the day, pray about opportunities to serve him in some way.

Meanwhile, stay where you're planted. Continue to be where God has placed you as... a good parent, helper, worker, business person- just as you always were...

For when I do this I know that I'm walking the straight path that Jesus set out for me. It's amazing just how many questions, puzzles and problems drain away from everyday existence when we know exactly what we're setting out to accomplish.

So may we each grow in a desire to live a life of faith that wants to consistently do whatever honours, and pleases God. Let's Pray...