

TEN MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PURPOSE

Q: Can one's purpose change?

A: No. You can have many expressions of purpose but the essence of who you are remains the same. My purpose is to create order out of chaos. Whatever my role, I find the chaos and bring the order. I do this when I write, speak, counsel, consult, travel, administrate and teach. I have done this as a pastor, executive director, consultant, teacher, board member, advisor, coach and mentor. I have brought order out of chaos in many different ways, but my purpose always stays the same.

Q: Can one have more than one purpose?

A: No. You can have many expressions of that purpose but still only one purpose. It helps if you make the distinction between role and purpose. My role as a father has changed over the years from when my children were small to now that they are adults. I also had a role of pastor, which I fulfilled for a number of years, but no longer do. Yet my essence that enables me to create order out of chaos never changes, no matter in what role I play at different stages of my life.

Q: What advice do you have for a husband and wife pursuing purpose?

A: I seldom see one person's purpose defined in terms of another, unless there is a severe disability or handicap that necessitates a spouse, sibling, or parent to devote much time to the care of their partner or child. In other words, a wife's purpose isn't to help her husband or raise her children. A woman has purpose before she marries or has children and will have purpose long after the children are gone or her husband departs this life. Most marriages try to create unity by maintaining uniformity. My advice to any couple is to find your individual purpose and then creatively work to see how both parties can find fulfillment. It takes faith and effort, but it can be done.

Q: What about children? How old should they be when you talk to them about purpose?

A: I have an article on this site by the title, *Never Too Young for Purpose*. That should answer the question. You start talking about purpose as early as possible and especially when it seems that God is talking to your young person about purpose. Also, please don't spend too much time pressuring your children to choose a career path. Help them identify and get comfortable with their strengths and weaknesses and urge them to pursue what they love, regardless of what the employment prospects look like. I am not saying they won't need a job, but to direct them into something from which they will earn income but for which they have no passion is a ticket to trouble in the long run. They will burn out and be frustrated. The sooner you can talk about purpose, the better.

Q: I thought I was to do anything God wanted me to do. Why should I search for purpose?

A: While it sounds noble to say, “I’ll do whatever You want, Lord,” it is actually a cop out and an attempt to avoid knowing the specific thing you were created to do. After all, you cannot be held accountable for what you don’t know. Yet that thinking creates a passive attitude that puts the burden of action on God; He must show you what to do rather than you discovering what He wants you to do. Passive people usually don’t find purpose. Those who actively seek it, find it and they find not only what they are to do, but also what they are not to do.

Q: Is there any difference between mission, calling, vocation, destiny, vision and purpose?

A: I chose purpose as the word to describe God’s will for your life because it seemed to have the least “baggage” attached to it. It is a word that can be used in secular and spiritual settings and it is one with which all people seem comfortable. I have never been a legalist concerning what you call purpose. If you are comfortable with mission, that’s fine with me, as long as it causes you to actively pursue understanding and fulfilling it.

Q: What is the difference between a gift and purpose?

Don’t fall into the trap of defining your purpose based on your gifts. Your gifts are tools in your tool box that help you fulfill your purpose. A plumber’s purpose isn’t to wrench. The plumber carries a wrench to help him (or her) to plumb, so to speak. I write, but my writing is a gift that helps me create order out of chaos. I have a sense of humor and make people laugh, but that is a gift that helps me communicate as I am bringing order out of chaos. Don’t stop when you define your gifts. If you have a gift of music, ask what effect it has on others, what feedback you receive and why you love it as you do.

Q: Why is my purpose so difficult to discover?

A: It is hard to find because we have been conditioned to think in certain ways. First, we are often not comfortable talking about who we are. So when I ask someone what their purpose is, I may hear something like this: “Well, I sort of, maybe, sometimes enjoy doing this or that, not that I’m very good and I may be wrong.” Then we have been taught to find a job and not work with what we love: “I love to paint but everyone knows you can’t make a living doing that, so I don’t paint.” Then we have been taught to be humble and to even deny that we do something well: “That was a wonderful dinner party!” Response: “Oh, it was nothing!”

Plus, purpose is so second nature that we tend to look right past it, waiting for something more spiritual, more “unlike” us. I often hear two words when people get close to describing their purpose. Those two words are “just” and “only.” People say, “I just listen to people” or “I only love to shop.” We don’t find purpose because of bad thinking. My job is give you better questions and better ways of understanding the answers.

Q: What should I do once I discover my purpose?

A: It may sound strange after all I've said, but you don't have to do anything. God wants you to fulfill your purpose more than you do, so He will meet you more than half way. The fulfillment of purpose will find you. That doesn't mean you don't have to get ready and improve. Take lessons, read books, practice, go to places where your purpose is celebrated, but don't feel like you have to do something. Rest in God and watch Him bring the problems to you for which you are the solution.

Q: It all seems so complicated to me. Can you simplify the PurposeQuest?

A. I can. It's all about doing what you love doing. Why would God give you a love to do something – and God has created you and is intimately acquainted with all your ways – and then not allow you to do it? Is God a tease? He is not! So find what gives you joy and do it as often as possible. If people pay you to do it, fine. If not, then do it when the kids are in bed or after your paying job. Don't try to figure it out or rationalize it, just do it and let God lead you where you need to be, where you want to be – to a place where the joy of the Lord is your strength.