



## **The Power of God's Purpose.**

Godly men experience the power of purpose. Throughout history, men who developed divinely-guided plans enjoyed the power and presence of God throughout their lives. Unfortunately, purpose-inspired planning is now taught only infrequently to modern boys and men. The essay below provides solutions, which might be summarized as follows:

- 1) You need a clear statement of calling. Calling is the most important thing you can do in which you would be most difficult to replace.
- 2) You need models. Look at people who enjoy success while pursuing a calling like yours.
- 3) You need a mentor. Once you have models, the mentor can help you determine the extent to which the models should inspire you while not distracting you. The mentor will know how to guide you in taking the success of your models to the next level.

The above summary is based on the more thorough discussion below. The following essay examines how men can experience the power of purpose as they learn from Biblical history, modern deviations from Biblical standards, the consequences of deviations, and suggested solutions.

### ***Biblical History***

Throughout his life, a male actively learned how to pursue a purpose consistent with divine purposes. From the time of Moses, leaders were taught to talk about God's decrees at all time and to impress the Commandments of God on the hearts of the youth that they instructed. (See, e.g., Deuteronomy 6:6-7.) A young man received active guidance from elders who knew and feared the Lord. These men frequently

---

prayed together and studied together in order to apply God's teachings in their families, churches, schools, businesses, and other institutions.

Until the dawn of the industrial age, elders encouraged young men to pursue a purpose directed by God. Family members and churches knew the young men well. Leaders would help each individual reflect on unique passions, gifts, abilities, skills, and talents that comprised a calling. Calling was defined by one Biblical author as, "the most important thing you can do in which you would be most difficult to replace." Typically this involved developing a vocation as a calling from God. The calling became the heart of each man's purpose statement.

Young men were encouraged to cultivate callings that contributed to the common good and strengthened the church. Most males had their purposes deeply instilled in their character as their elders helped them develop purpose statements over the course of many years. While the purpose resonated with the soul of the individual, it also contributed to the well-being of the community.

When reading about successful men across the centuries, one notices a clear pattern. Tradesmen and professionals developed skills and character through mentoring. Mature men on farms would often spend twelve or more hours per day imparting a strong work ethic in the next generation. Craftsmen typically joined guilds in their early teens and spent decades laboring along side more experienced adults. Scholarly youth would go to university towns to earn much more than a credential. Rather, students developed deep friendships, wisdom, and character while living with a professor or studying under tutors who knew and disciplined the students. The same patterns of learning applied in public service where senior knights mentored the novices. Young lawyers never attended law school; instead, they learned jurisprudence while "reading the law" in the office of respected barristers who had learned the craft from seasoned men before them. Experienced artists guided the development of protégés. In religious institutions, spiritual mentors provided room and board for disciples who studied pastoral activities.

---

Throughout all of culture, the younger generation developed a deep sense of purpose. Because this culture was Christian, a man developed his calling in an atmosphere of prayer and Bible study. As seen in journals from earlier centuries, young men reflected deeply on their desire to honor God privately and publicly.

### *Modern Deviations from Biblical Standards*

Too many Christians have forgotten how their ancestors actively developed their callings and purpose statements. Over each passing generation, men typically spend less time working and studying with their fathers. The close-knit and loving learning environment of previous centuries has in many cases been replaced with dull rhetoric about quality time and good experiences. Men who seek to maintain or restore a healthy mentoring relationship under the authority of older men or church elders typically find few modern models. Too often, men must settle for academic credentials earned under bureaucratic teachers rather than a calling instilled with guidance from a Godly mentor. Even more disturbing, the mentors often lack a foundational understanding of Biblical discipleship.

Even men with clear callings seldom meet daily for prayer and the study of God's Word in their families, schools, business, governments, and other institutions. Now prayer and serious Bible study are almost entirely absent from the institutions that dominate the lives of most men. Tragically, too few churches equip men to restore commitment to daily corporate prayer and Bible study in modern institutions.

When 20<sup>th</sup> century men spend little time with Godly elders and mentors, they instead passively accept the unfocussed purposes of secular leaders around them. Secular institutions generally promote relativism and expediency rather than moral absolutes. Modern leaders emphasize management by utilitarian objectives with only infrequent references to the objective of Christian unity based on a Spirit-led understanding of Christ's character. With a continual and deliberate effort to tie each

---

thought back to the words of Christ, selfish personal interests bias thinking. This results in decisions that are desire-driven rather than Spirit-led.

During the last 50 years, society has deviated tremendously from the foundations established during most of the 3,500 years since Moses gave us God's Law. Institutions that affirmed the Ten Commandments until the 1960's now ban display of these foundational teachings from Deuteronomy and Exodus. Even when modern relativistic utilitarian institutions affirm God, the abstract religious rhetoric seldom has a definable spiritual foundation.

### *Consequences of Deviations*

Until the 1960's, most men could adequately derive their purpose by modeling the character and purposes of leaders around them. This somewhat passive process worked because most leaders were substantially Christian. Purpose statements may not have been articulated by the individual but people observing the individual could confirm that he followed Godly examples. Such statements of purpose were often sub-optimal but sufficient.

Today, in a world of relativistic and utilitarian institutions, most men live in environments that do not promote formation of even minimally adequate statements of divine purpose. Instead, institutions and the people within them have ephemeral missions that seldom unite men in a meaningful and enduring way. Now, "[w]e make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful." (C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* 35 (New York: Macmillan, 1941))

In an attempt to remedy the lack of Christian leadership in institutions, men have increasingly been gathering together. Unfortunately, these gatherings are typically based on shallow statements of faith or vague statements of purpose. Leaders typically encourage unity based on sensitivity to people around them. This emphasis on feelings may de-emphasize thought about identity, mission, and other aspects of

---

God's purpose. Unity based on empathy or "being nice" compromises unity based on a robust and healthy understanding of Christ's character.

In short, men's groups often promote sentimentalized togetherness without emphasizing unity based on first principles taught by Christ. Or, as Harry Blamires (a distinguished student of C. S. Lewis) writes, "Christianity is emasculated of its intellectual relevance. It remains a vehicle of spiritual and moral guidance at the individual level perhaps; at the communal level it is little more than an expression of sentimentalized togetherness." (Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think* (Servant Publications)).

A man without well-reasoned understanding of the purpose given by his Creator will experience separation from God. If God does not fill the vacuum in a man's heart, then idols will. Many men succumb to idols of history as they compromise their identities in Christ by trying to emulate sports figures, prominent CEO's, or other mortal beings who do not reflect the character of Christ. Other men pursue idols of nature as materialistic pursuits or sexual lusts consume time and money resources that should instead be spent in service to God. Blinded by idols, many modern men now emphasize enhancement of their fame or growth of their investment portfolios rather than development of God-honoring relationships.

When God is not honored in relationships, social decay sets in. Individuals not serving God will soon find themselves working at cross-purposes. Rather than apply God's Word to resolve conflicts, men will resort to passive "peace-faking" or aggressive "peace-breaking." Individuals pursue personal agendas despite growing evidence of broken relationships. Even men who honor God with their lips soon discover their communities beset with the same social problems that plague secular communities. We begin to understand why leading cultural indicators (tracking divorce, alcoholism, venereal disease, illegitimate births, crime, etc.) in so-called Christian communities look as bad as the indicators in the secular communities. We also see how shallow statements of faith, while appearing to affirm the Christian faith,

---

seldom provide useful guidance in helping conflicted people restore peace with God and one another.

Addressing damaged relationships is not easy. It is even more difficult to admit that we contribute to the relational strains by pursuing idols instead of God. Rather than admit how our idolatry causes broken relationships, we frequently resort to cover-ups. These cover-ups, although not the primary causes of conflict, quickly become secondary causes of broken relationships. Such secondary causes occur when we shade the truth, turn a blind-eye to injustice, practice favoritism, and commit myriad other subtle sins. Very many of these secondary sins occur when we use our tongues to impede healing of broken relationships with God and one another. We may criticize or undermine peacemakers who seek to address primary and secondary sins in a prayerful and Biblical manner. Too often, we end pursuit of truth with negative comments that provide little hope or guidance for moving forward in positive ways. Rather than meet with offended brothers to address differences, we keep our fellow men at a distance with harsh language.

In short, a man without a clear purpose derived from God easily succumbs to idolatry. Idolatry leads to sinful cover-ups. With a little reflection we could make a long list of other primary and secondary sins that result from a man not pursuing a divinely-guided purpose.

### *Proposed Solutions*

Men must once again turn to God for inspiration when developing their statements of purpose. Men committed to Scripture must help one another know and follow God. We must come together to pursue statements of purpose that glorify our Lord. We must help one another search history and Scripture for Godly models that can inspire each individual.

As an alternative to the passive or unfocused approach of many men's groups, men must be focused and active. The activity should not be based just on our own

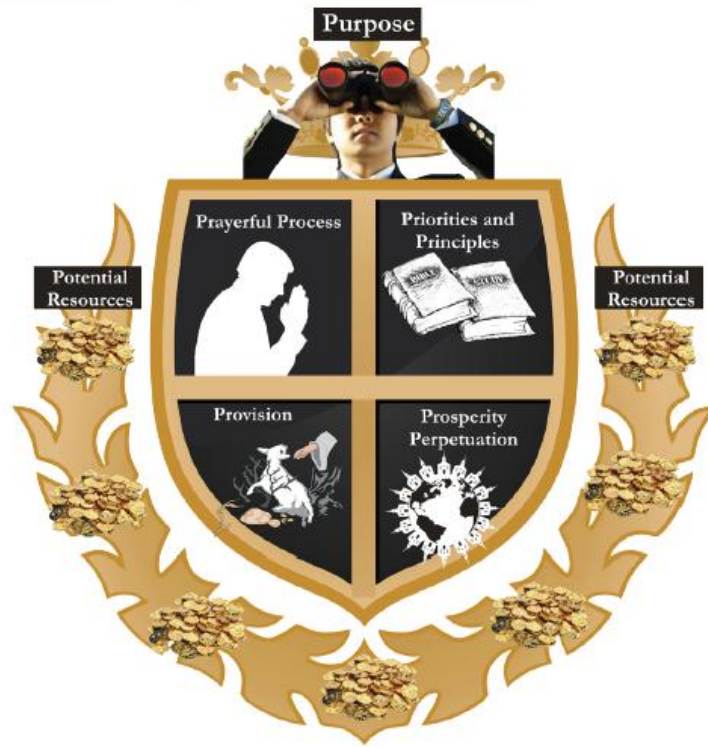
---

desires, but on what God is doing all around us. Let's help one another hear God's voice so that we can enjoy the abundant blessings of joining with our Lord. "... [T]he kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it...." Let's hear what Christ is teaching us! (See, e.g., Matthew 11:12,15)

Men can restore commitment to God's purposes by helping one another develop divinely-guided plans. Church leaders can provide valuable instruction about, 1) recognizing potential, 2) knowing God's purpose, 3) hearing God's call, 4) reflecting God's character (e.g., His priorities and principles), 5) experiencing the blessings of obedience, and 6) pursuing a pathway for personal and community prosperity. As explained in essays at [www.covenant.net](http://www.covenant.net) [1] and as modeled in the coat of arms below, these 6 elements reflect a deep understanding of God's character. A book on these six topics is available at [www.BiblicalCounsel.org](http://www.BiblicalCounsel.org).

Church-based men's group meetings should help each participant develop a clear plan for his relationship with God and also with people in his family, church, company, or other important institutions. The best planning often helps each man clarify his models. A man should know his calling well enough so that he can articulate it and identify other Godly men who have achieved success with similar callings. If a man can watch how several models cultivated their callings successfully, he will likely have much inspiration.

Experience teaches that a man's plan will not be clear until it is in writing. There is too much risk of miscommunication unless a man articulates his plan after carefully reflecting on God's plan for his life. The written statements must be updated in response to the prayers of other Godly men. Prayer partners should read the plans of men they support in prayer in order to understand the spiritual and vocational issues impacting each man.



A church can build an effective planning ministry by helping each man develop a written plan. Secular studies show that an individual typically enjoys far greater fulfillment in his career and happiness in his marriage and other relationships when he has a written plan based on a clear purpose.[2] A good church will help the man appreciate how even greater power results from dedicating his purpose to honoring and serving God.

To develop a planning ministry, a church should first gather together men who understand the value of committing their life plans to the Lord. Second, the church should provide instruction about creating written plans. Third, a church should help each man find three or four prayer partners who share common spiritual and vocational concerns. These men can form small prayer and accountability groups that meet regularly throughout a year or more.

Ideally, each man should be in a men's group that knows the man well enough to help him identify not just models but also a mentor. A mentor can help a man clarify



---

the extent to which he should follow models and the extent to which the man can transcend the success of his models by pursuing unique abilities.

As a man in a planning and accountability group matures or finds new opportunities to meet with other prayer partners, a man can leave a group to form a new group of three or four men. In this way, groups should multiply according to a "2 Timothy 2:2 model" characterized by reliable men becoming qualified to teach others.

Men who help one another develop and communicate clear statements of purpose will increasingly enjoy the power and presence of God throughout their lives. These men can unite to help a Christian community understand and communicate great clarity about its identity and mission. Clarity about identity and mission invariable produces the unity encouraged by Apostle Paul when he wrote, "then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." (Philippians 2:2) Moreover, God reminds us repeatedly about the power of unity based on shared understanding. For example, in Genesis 11:6, our Lord said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them."

### Endnotes

[1]

<a href="http://covenant.net/essays/essay_02.pdf">http://covenant.net/essays/essay_02.pdf</a>	This essay includes Bible verses related to the five main covenantal elements of God's character. It suggests how an individual can reflect God's character through a life plan.
<a href="http://covenant.net/essays/essay_03.pdf">http://covenant.net/essays/essay_03.pdf</a>	This essay suggests how individuals can develop a life plan by following lessons from history.
<a href="http://covenant.net/essays/essay_05.pdf">http://covenant.net/essays/essay_05.pdf</a>	This essay suggests how individuals can join together in covenant communities. Such communities can reflect God's character in the boardroom, courtroom, classroom, family room, etc.

[2] In his book, *What They Don't Teach You in the Harvard Business School*, Mark McCormack documents how 1979 Harvard MBA graduates benefited from having a clear statement of purpose. MBA students were asked, "Have you set clear, written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?" Only 13% had goals, and only 3% of the graduates reported having written goals and plans. 84% could not articulate specific goals. When all of these students were interviewed again ten years later, the researchers found that the 13 percent of the class with clear goals were earning approximately twice as

---

much as the 84% who could not articulate clear goals. The 3% with written goals were earning approximately 10 times more than the other 97% combined.

Copyright 1993-2010  
[tim@covenant.net](mailto:tim@covenant.net)