Personal Study Guide

The Purpose Driven® Life

by Rick Warren

What on earth am I here for?

Living Water United Church of Christ
Winter 2018

Session One: What on earth am I here for?
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A study based on the book "The Purpose Driven® Life"
written by Rick Warren, published (2002) by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI

Unless otherwise noted all biblical quotes are taken from the NIV
(1973, 1978, 1984) by International Bible Society

Personal Study Guide

The Purpose Driven® Life

You are about to launch out on a 40-day spiritual journey. It promises to be a great trip where we will grow in our love for God, our service to Christ and our attention to the Holy Spirit.

PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY

Like all journeys you need to be sure to pack properly. So here is a list of what you'll need for this amazing trip:

Your Bible. In a recent small group study, it was listed as the # 1 item that would be needed if stranded on a desert island. Don't begin this journey without it!

A listening ear. Set aside time each day to read one chapter of the Purpose Driven Life and listen to what God is saying to you. Reflect on it. Think about the questions at the end of each chapter and those in this study guide.

A willing heart. The purpose of this journey is not to critique the bestseller, The Purpose Driven® Life. No - we are going on this journey to deepen our relationship with God and sharpen the focus of our hearts on "treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20). The book is merely a tool for that end. Don't focus on the tool - focus on the relationship between yourself and God.

Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do." (Romans 12:2, New Living Translation)

TIPS FOR THE JOURNEY

Now that you are packed, here are some tips to help you arrive at your destination.

Keep your eyes on the goal. Sometimes the trip will be tough. We'll be examining some large life questions and that takes energy, time and honesty. All of these can be draining. But don't give up, keep your eyes on the goal, the end result and it will be worth it.

Travel in a group. On long journeys it helps to travel with some friends who will encourage you along the way, correct you when you've gotten lost; and share the joy of the journey with you as you go.

Be sure to ask questions. Each week the pastor will be preaching on the major themes of the book. This booklet has been designed to help you stop and reflect on what you are reading and on God's Word. If there is anything you don't understand or an issue you need help in addressing, be sure to speak up in your small group, or privately with your small group leader or with one of the pastors.

A PRAYER FOR THE JOURNEY

Well, we're packed and almost prepared. The last thing we need to do is pray and then we can set off.

Dear God, As I set off on this journey I pray that You would be my Leader and Guide. You are the great God and I trust You with all aspects of my life. I know that Your purposes and plans are good and perfect. I pray that when the questions get touchy and my spirit starts to lag grant me a willing heart and ears to hear what You are trying to teach me.

Lord I pray too for my fellow travelers in my small group. Encourage them along the way. Keep them from all temptation and together may we discover Your purposes for each one of us. Amen.

Session One: What on earth am I here for?

Behind the scenes where we cannot see,
A hand divine works the things that be,
And brings to my path the scheme devised
By the Maker of earth who built the skies,
But He leaves me to choose the life He plans,
Or to walk the way of self's demands,
To build on the rock or the sinking sand.

-- J. Oswald Sanders[1]

Day 1

It is important that you understand that your purpose or mission in life is *why* you are doing what you are doing. It is not *what* you are doing. Some people spend their energy doing all sorts of things; they are running here and there. "Busy, Busy, Busy" is their motto. It is when we stop and think about why we are doing what we are doing that we are examining the purpose of life. Someone may say, "My purpose is to make lots of money." However, "making lots of money" is in the "doing" category. Find out why a person wants to make money, and you'll probably discover what is his or her life purpose. This study is about purpose. It's about the "Why?" question.

Read Colossians 1:16. For whom were you created?

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Day 2

Read Psalm 139:14-16. How do you react when you read these words?

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"God made you so he could love you" (pg. 24) Can you list three ways that you have experienced God's love? List them below.

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Day 3

"Without purpose, life is motion without meaning, activity without direction, and events without reason. Without a purpose, life is trivial, petty, and pointless." (pg. 30) Do you agree or disagree? Have you ever felt this way? When?

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Solomon, one time King of Israel, searched for the purpose of life. Ecclesiastes is his personal reflection of that search. Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-10 and list things that drove Solomon.

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Do you think this reflects most people's drives?

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What has been a driving force in your life?

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What is Solomon's conclusion to all this in Ecclesiastes 2:11?

This chapter lists five benefits of living life with purpose. Which one(s) excite you – and do you hope to grasp by the end of the study? Why?

Day 4

Read Luke 12:16-21. What was the rich man's purpose in life? Do you think he would have lived differently if he knew that this world was not the end?

Read Matthew 16:24-26. According to Jesus how do we find life, purpose? What is required of us? Give concrete examples of what Jesus is speaking about.

Day 5

"*Some people compare life to a circus, a minefield, a roller coaster, a puzzle, a symphony, a journey, or a dance. Some say that "life is a game of cards: You have to play the hand that you're dealt." (pg. 41)* This chapter states that life is a test, it is a trust and it is a temporary assignment. When you read these words how did you react? Did this change the way you think about life at all?

Has God tested you? If so, how did you do? What did you learn about yourself/God?

What has God put under your care? Are you listening for his "Well done"?

Day 6

In Ecclesiastes 3:11 we read that God "*has set eternity in the hearts of men*". This means that we were meant to live forever. This life is not all that there is. Why do you think we sometimes forget this?

What would change in your life if you realized that earth is not your home?

Day 7

In I Corinthians 10:31 we read, "*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*" Would you agree that that is a worthy purpose for life? How can we become more aware of God's glory? How can you live for this purpose?

THIS WEEK'S SUMMARY

The one thing I learned this week about God's purpose for me is

The one thing I will do as a result of this is

Session Two: You were planned for God's pleasure

"Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of mind with his truth; the purifying of imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love; the surrender of the will to his purpose – and all this gathered in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable."

-- ***William Temple***[2]

Day 8

Citing Revelation 4:11 Rick Warren states: *"The moment you were born into the world, God was there as an unseen witness, smiling at your birth. He wanted you alive, and your arrival gave him great pleasure. God did not need to create you, but he chose to create you for his own enjoyment. You exist for his benefit, his glory, his purpose, and his delight."(pg 63)* How does this statement make you think about God and your relationship with Him?

In these chapters we discover that we give God pleasure by worshipping Him. Worship is defined as a lifestyle, not an event. Is this different from how you normally think of worship? How?

Colossians 3:23 reads, "*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.*" Rick Warren suggests that this is the key to making worship a lifestyle. Everything becomes worship when you dedicate it to God and perform it with an awareness of His presence. How can you make work, your friendships and or your marriage, your leisure time an act of worship?

Day 9

Read Isaiah 1:10-17 and Isaiah 29:13. What was wrong with the worship that was being offered? What does God say about such worship? What kind of worship does God desire?

What does Hosea 6:6 say God desires above all? Are you giving this to God?

This chapter suggests that there are five acts of worship that bring delight to God – to love Him supremely, to trust him completely, to obey him wholeheartedly, to praise and thank him continually, to sue our abilities. Which one(s) of these is a strength for you? Which one(s) of these do you need to address and improve?

Day 10

"True worship – bringing God pleasure-happens when you give yourself completely to God." (pg. 78) Does this definition help you redefine worship as a lifestyle rather than an event? How?

Read Romans 12:1, 2. What do these verses say about living a life that pleases God? What are some ways in which you are vulnerable to the world's values?

What barriers keep you from dedicating your whole life to God? Do these barriers come down when you realize that "*when we completely surrender ourselves to Jesus, we discover that he is not a tyrant, but a saviour; not a boss, but a brother; not a dictator, but a friend.*"? *(page 79)*

Have you ever written a contract with God that says, "From this day forward, I am a slave of Jesus Christ?" Would you do it today?

Day 11

On day 11 we learn that God wants to be our friend. Like me, you may react against this idea. It makes our relationship with God sound casual. But be sure to read Rick Warren's definition of "friendship with God". *"It is a close trusted relationship." (pg. 86)* This is no mere casual friendship. Is that a new truth to you? Do you sometimes deny God that pleasure and think that it's not for you?

Create a breath prayer and practice it today.

Day 12

We discover that a close and intimate relationship with God can be developed through prayer, honesty, obedience, choosing what God chooses, and a heartfelt desire for God. Which of these would be a strength for you? Which would be a weakness that you would like to develop? Write a short action plan to strengthen this weakness.

Day 13

Read 2 Samuel 24:24. What is worship costing you? In the worship event are you coming to get or give?

In what ways do you think you can improve your public/private worship of God?

Day 14

Read Hebrews 13:5. Have you ever experienced a spiritually dark time? What was it like? Did you experience God in the midst of it? How?

Which of the suggestions in this chapter would you practice next time God feels distant?

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THIS WEEK'S SUMMARY

The one thing I learned this week about God's purpose for me is

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The one thing I will do as a result of this is

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Session Three: You were formed for God's family

"The church is not a building,
The church is not a steeple,
The church is not a resting place,
The church is a people."
-- ***Richard Avery and Donald Marsh*** [3]

Day 15
Read John 1:10-13. List one privilege that comes from believing in Jesus Christ.

In 1 John 3:1 we are clearly told that through faith in Christ we become children of God. Look up the following texts and list the benefits that are ours because we are part of God's family:

Romans 12:5

Romans 8:17

Galatians 4:6-7

Ephesians 3:12

I Peter 1:3-5

What difference does it make to you knowing that as a believer you now belong to God's family?

Day 16
Read 1 Timothy 3:14, 15. The church is described as a family. What characteristics of healthy families would be true of healthy churches?

What are the barriers that keep us from loving and caring for other believers?

Read 1 John 3:14-18. What explanation does John give us about our responsibility to love our fellow believers?

Do you make relationships a priority? If so, how? If not, how can you change?

Day 17
The Christian life involves more than believing - it involves belonging to part of His family with satisfying fellowship with others. In Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37 we see examples of the true fellowship of the early church. What principles can we learn from these examples?

In 1 Corinthians 11:22 Paul asks the Corinthian believers, "Do you despise the church…?" What is your attitude toward the church?

Are you an active member of S.C.B.C. or an attender?

Day 18
What aspect of fellowship (authenticity, mutuality, sympathy, mercy) is most attractive to you? Why?

Acts 2:42 says that the early believers "devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship…" How do you devote yourself to the fellowship of S.C.B.C.?

Day 19
This chapter outlines the characteristics of genuine community as being, honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality and frequency. Which of these do you find it easy to practice (Don't say humility!) Which of these do you need to put into practice?

Day 20
Is there someone you need to restore a relationship with? Are the steps offered in this chapter helpful to you? How?

Day 21

Read Romans 14:19. What could you/your small group do to protect and promote the unity in our church?

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Session Four: You were created to become like Christ

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing.
-- Stephen Olford [4]

Day 22
"God's ultimate goal for your life on earth is not comfort, but character development. He wants you to grow up spiritually and become like Christ."
The good news in this chapter is that God's Spirit is working in you to help you become like Christ. But we have a responsibility too. Read Ephesians 4:22-24 and list three responsibilities that are ours in becoming like Christ.

Which of these responsibilities is the Spirit affirming in you? Which is He calling you to put in place?

Day 23
Discipleship is a two way responsibility. God works in us by His Holy Spirit and we work at becoming more like Christ. Change begins when we change the way we think.

Read Romans 12:2. What is one area of your life where you need to stop thinking your way and start thinking God's way?

Day 24
Look up 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and list the ways that Bible is useful in life.

How have you found the Bible to be "useful" in your life? What keeps the Bible from being more useful in your spiritual development?

Is there a word from God that you have received yet have failed to implement?

Day 25
Read Romans 8:28-29. According to this verse what is the purpose of troubles in life?

"Problems don't automatically produce what God intends. Many people become bitter, rather than better, and never grow up. You have to respond the way Jesus would." (pg. 197)

What are the three ways listed in this chapter that describe the way Jesus would respond to trouble? Is there one of these that particularly speaks to your situation? Is there one that you would like to practice more often?

Are you facing a problem right now? What do you think God wants you to learn from it?

Day 26
Read James 4:7 and I Corinthians 10:13. What should our response be to temptations?

Day 27
"Do you really want to be healed of that persistent temptation that keeps defeating you over and over? God's solution is plain: Don't repress it; confess it! Don't conceal it; reveal it. Revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing." (pg. 21-213) Do you agree? Have you experienced this in your life?

Day 28
Read Philippians 1:6. In what area of your spiritual growth do you need to allow God to nurture?

A year from now, how would you like to be more Christ-like? Write out the steps you can take to move toward your goal. What can you do today to start this process?

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Session Five: You were shaped for serving God

Only one life to live,
Twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last
-- ***Anonymous***

"Every member of the Body has the potential to be – and should be fed and led toward functioning as – a fully equipped agent of Jesus Christ, as His minister."
-- ***Jack Hayford***[5]

Day 29
Read Ephesians 2:10. What does this verse say we are called to do?

There is an old Christian slogan that stated that we "*were saved to serve*". What excuse do you frequently use to keep from serving God?

Day 30
Read I Corinthians 12:1-11. According to this passage why were we given spiritual gifts?

Have you recognized the spiritual gift(s) God has given you? If not, take time to discern it (them) through the Holy Spirit. Ask God for opportunities to use it in serving others.

"Don't settle for just achieving "the good life," because the good life is not good enough. Ultimately it doesn't satisfy. You can have a lot to live on and still have nothing to live for. Aim instead for "*the better life" – serving God in a way that expresses your heart. Figure out what you love to do – what God gave you a heart to do – and then do it for His glory.*" (*pg 239*) Do you have a lot to live on, but still nothing to live for? What is it that God has given you a heart to do? Are you doing it?

Day 31
This chapter completes the study of the five ways that God shapes us for service; spiritual gifts, abilities, heart's desire, personality and experiences. As you read through this, did God point out an area in which you could serve another, the church? If so, what is it?

If you have difficulty answering today's first question break it down.
What you enjoy doing? – Can you offer that in service to God?
What are your abilities? – Can you offer them in service to God?
What experience do you have? Can you offer it in service to God?

Day 32
Read 2 Timothy 1:6. Have you allowed your particular gift of service to become an ember? Do you need to fan it into flame?

Which of the three actions examined in this chapter do you need to practice? (Discover your shape? Accept and enjoy your shape? Go on developing your shape?)

Day 33
Read Philippians 2:1-7. How does Paul tell us to imitate Christ's heart and actions to serve others?

List the six characteristics of real servanthood. Ask a friend to tell you which is a strength for you and which do you need to build into your character?

Day 34
Read Philippians 2:19-30. What can we learn from Timothy (verse 21) and Epaphroditus (verse 30) example of service?

Day 35
What does Paul compare us to in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12? Do you sometimes feel that being a "*jar of clay*" is more of hindrance to your acts of service than a help? Where does this verse say the real power to serve comes from?

How have you seen God's power demonstrated through you when you felt weak?

THIS WEEK'S SUMMARY

The one thing I learned this week about God's purpose for me is

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Session Six: You were made for a mission

A notorious British murderer was sentenced to die. The morning of his execution the prison chaplain walked beside him to the gallows and routinely read some Bible verses. The prisoner was shocked that the chaplain was so perfunctory, unmoved, and uncompassionate in the shadow of the scaffold. He said to the preacher, "Sir, if I believed what you and the church say you believe, even if England was covered with glass from coast to coast, … I would walk over it – if need be on my hands and knees – and think it worthwhile, just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that."

-- ***Quoted by Alvin Reid***[6]

Day 36

"*He saves us and then sends us out… We are the messengers of Gods' love and purposes of the world.*" What are some typical fears and stereotypes that you have when you hear the word "*evangelism*"? Do you see your mission to share God's love as a "*wonderful privilege?*"

What will it cost you to fulfill your mission?

Read Colossians 4:2-5. What principles can you learn about sharing Christ with unbelievers?

Day 37

Take some time to write out your testimony. Use a separate piece of paper. The book gives you some help in how to write it. It is helpful to divide it into four parts:

1) What my life was like before I met Jesus.
2) How I realized I needed Jesus.
3) How I committed my life to Jesus.
4) The difference Jesus has made in my life.

Consider sharing your testimony with your small group. It will be a blessing and a help to many.

Day 38

Read Luke 5:27-32; 7:34. What kind of people did Jesus associate with? How accepting are you of people who need God's message of love, forgiveness and hope?

This chapter offers several steps to help us to think like "world class" Christians:

- Shift from self-centered thinking to other-centered thinking
- Shift from local thinking to global thinking.
- Shift from "here and now" thinking to eternal thinking.
- Shift from thinking of excuses to thinking of creative ways to fulfill your commission.

Is there one of these that really spoke to you? Is there one or more of these that you feel God wants you to act on? How will you do it? When will you do it?

Day 39

Which of the four activities outlined in this chapter (join a small group, take a spiritual check up, journal your progress, share what you've learned) caught your attention? Write out a plan as to how you will start to practice it.

Day 40

At the end of the day how will you answer God when he asks you these questions?

- Did you put Jesus at the center of your life?
- Did you develop his character?
- Did you devote your life to serving others?
- Did you communicate his message and fulfill his mission?
- Did you love and participate in his family?

Write out your personal purpose statement.

THIS WEEK'S SUMMARY

The one thing I learned this week about God's purpose for me is

The one thing I will do as a result of this is

ENDNOTES

1. J. Oswald Sanders, *Every Life Is A Plan Of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Discovery House Publishers, 1992), p.11

2. William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel* (MacMillan, 1942), p. 68

3. Richard Avery and Donald Marsh, *We Are the Church* (Pasadena, California: Hope Publishing House, 1972)

4. Stephen Olford, *Not I, But Christ* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1995), p. 86

5. Jack Hayford quoted by Charles Colson, *The Body* (Dallas, Texas, Word Publishing, 1992), p. 275

6. Quoted by Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), p. 111