

The Man in the Mirror:

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

Purpose: Why Do I Exist?

Unedited Transcript

Matthew 22:36-40, Genesis 1:27-28, Matthew 28:18-20, Philippians 2:12-13, Ephesians 2:10

Good morning, men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror's Men's Bible Study, where we always have room for one more guy! Let's go ahead and greet a couple of groups that we have not talked about before. The first one goes to Men on a Mission of St. John Missionary Baptist Church in Knoxville, TN. 10 men who meet at the church weekly on Saturday mornings using the Video Bible Study. Paul Garrett is their leader. We're looking for an Area Director in Knoxville, by the way.

Then, the second shout out goes to a new group today, the Camilla First Assembly of God Men's Group of Camilla First Assembly of God in Camilla, GA. 10 men who meet at the church weekly on Wednesdays at 7:00pm using the Video Bible Study. Led by Craig Foister. We also need an Area Director in Southern Georgia. So I wonder if you would join me in welcoming these men as they are a part of the Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're glad to have you with us!

The series we're in is The Man in the Mirror: Solving the 24 Problems Men Face. Today, we're going to talk about the chapter on purpose, why do I exist? I'm a high school dropout. Not proud of it. A lot of students drop out of high school, but I don't think that the reason they drop out of high school is really that well understood. It's usually not because students are lazy or apathetic or losers, but it's more what happened in my case. Somewhere around the middle of my tenth grade year, about the time that our family dropped out of church, I began to become frustrated with all of the diversity that was taught in my high school. You'd go to biology class and they would tell me what the slime I'd evolved out of was, and then you would go to English literature class and they would talk about the world of literature. Then you would go to geography class and they would discuss the crust of the earth and the stuff it was made of. Where I went to high school, nobody ever tried to bring a unity to all of that diversity, and so I couldn't see any purpose to life. I couldn't see how it fit together, and so by the time I was a senior, I only needed twelfth grade English to graduate, so in my boredom, I signed up for DE and worked half a day and went to school half a day. By the middle of my senior year, by January, that got to be too much, and I quit. The driving force for my life all through high school was I wanted my life to count, I wanted there to be a purpose, but I couldn't see any purpose. I couldn't see any reason for existence, so in utter despair, I just dropped out.

Different people, different men, drop out at different ages. I dropped out at eighteen, but I also meet men who drop out at twenty-eight. I've met men who dropped out at thirty-five. I've met men who dropped out at forty-two, at fifty, nice round number. I've met more men who have dropped out at the age of fifty-five and older by far than all of the others combined! Because men often, and this is the thesis for the chapter in *The Man in the Mirror*, and by the way it was the original thesis too, and the thesis is that most men don't know God's purpose for their life or their purpose is too small. So today

what I want us to do is look at this topic, and the message is really for, especially for, the man who maybe has never known God's purpose for his life. Or maybe he's confused about what that purpose is. Maybe you feel like you've plateaued in your life, or maybe you dropped out. Maybe you know what your purpose is and so today will just be a good refresher for you to further clarify or confirm God's purpose for your life. But a lot of men are thinking this, they're thinking there must be more.

"There must be more."

A lot of men are thinking there's just got to be! There must be more to life than this! I love to set goals, so when I quit high school, my dad drove me down to the enlistment office. He wasn't going to let me hang around the house. So I got to Ft. Bragg North Carolina, I took the GED test, and they had an extension of North Carolina State University right there on the campus of beautiful Ft. Bragg, NC. So I started taking classes, looking for a purpose. I remember in an English literature class studying for an examination, reading Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to be specific, and I ran across this line of verse:

This above all, to thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day. Thou canst not then be false to any man.

And I remember thinking eureka! This is it! This is the noblest thought that I've ever heard uttered in my life! I'm going to adopt this as my credo! I'm going to build this as the purpose of my life, my existence around this! I'm going to try to do the right thing by every person I meet every day, and on that day I become a moralist. That became the purpose of my life, to be a moralist, but I quickly began to meet others. Any time you join a new group like the Chamber of Commerce or the Rotary Club, you begin to meet the other members, and so I began to meet the other moralists in the world. I quickly realized that all moralists basically have one thing in common, none of them have any money. So I decided that I would also become a materialist and try to make some real money without giving up being a moralist, and so my purpose became a bit of an adaptation, I became a moral materialist. Or maybe a material moralist, and then I began to set goals, because I love goals! And the goals had to do with being moral and making money. You know how it goes, you set a goal, you work real hard, six months pass, you meet the goal, there's a sense of euphoria. Two weeks later, the novelty wears off, and you have to do what? Set another goal, and the other goal has to be what? Bigger, better, brighter, faster, higher, shinier, longer... all right? Then you work real hard for another six months, on the new goal. You meet the goal! There's a sense of euphoria! Ah! Everything I always wanted! Until two weeks go by, and the novelty wears off and then what happens? You have to set a new goal again! And again that new goal has to be what? Bigger and better and all those things! If you're like me and most men, then you have gone through that process and you get to a point where you say what is the purpose? There's just got to be more! It just becomes a kind of unrelated string of hollow victories, and you get increasingly frustrated as more and more is accomplished! There must be more! Setting and meeting goals is intoxicating, and I love doing that! But here's the problem: the price of getting what you want is getting what you want. It just isn't enough!

Met goals without having a purpose that you're working toward is a formula for disillusionment at best, and confusion as well. There's a distinction between what and why. What we do is the goal, what we're pursuing is the goal. But then why we do what we do, what is the reason behind that particular goal? Is it to make a lot of money? Is it to be a moral person? What I have discovered, and most of you have discovered, and hopefully all of us will live by the understanding that purposes not linked to God and why God created us are doomed! Doomed to be disillusioning and not satisfying. Ask yourself, do my goals reflect my examination of life's larger meaning and God's purpose for my life? Do you know why

God created you? If you're not sure, you will have all the equipment you need to figure that out by the time you leave this morning, and if you do know then you'll be able to confirm or if you're a little fuzzy, you'll be able to clarify it by the time you meet this morning. This is the Big Idea: **I will feel most alive, most useful, and most significant when I am doing what God created me to do.** How happy would a lion be if he couldn't roar? How happy would an eagle be if he couldn't soar? How happy would a dolphin be if he couldn't jump? A fish if he couldn't swim? How happy would a man be if he can't do what he was created to do? God has a purpose for our lives! God has a purpose for your life!

Why do we exist?

So why do we exist? There was a time when I thought that my purpose in life, the reason that I existed was to become financially independent. My values were, as we talked about in previous messages, personal peace and affluence. I thought that if I could just accumulate enough money to be financially independent, that that would... but that was not a purpose that was big enough! It was certainly not why God created me, and so I became a cultural Christian, seeking the God that I wanted instead of the God who is.

Let's take a look at why we exist from God's perspective from the word of God. Let's begin at Matthew 22. This is a huge topic, there's no way we could drill down on every specific of this, but on your tables are some outlines, it's called Purpose Outline. I'm going to put it up on the screen. Same thing, and you can take this with you, but I want to just familiarize you a little bit with it.

Purpose Outline

I. Eternal Purpose

God's eternal purpose for us is eternal life.

II. Earthly Purpose

God's earthly purpose for us is to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

A. Universal Earthly Purpose

There is a sense in which all men are alike, and God gives all men the same universal purposes. The Bible reveals four universal purposes or, if you prefer, one purpose with four parts—two which relate to relationships and two which relate to tasks:

- 1. The Great Commandment** (Matthew 22:37): To love God
- 2. The Royal Commandment** (John 13:34-35): To love one another
- 3. The Great Commission** (Matthew 18:1-20): To build the kingdom
- 4. The Cultural Mandate** (Genesis 1:28): To tend the culture

B. Personal Life Purpose

There is also a sense in which each of us is unique, and God gives each of us a different personal life purpose (Philippians 2:13, Acts 17:26, Ephesians 2:10, 1 Peter 4:10-11). Like a fingerprint, our life purpose is a one-of-a-kind set of marching orders that combines the four universal purposes to which God calls all men. That unique combination draws from our spiritual gifts, natural abilities, acquired competencies, assigned times and places, roles, deeds, service, love, and the Spirit—all of which issue from Jesus Christ.

So you can see that we have, from this outline, eternal purpose, and we have earthly purpose. Then, when you get to our earthly purpose (why we exist here in this life), there is a universal earthly purpose that applies to all men at all times in all ways. But there also is a sense in which each of us is unique, and God has a personal purpose for us. What I want to do when we talk about why we exist, all men, I want us to look at this II, A, our universal earthly purpose. You could call it either four purposes or one purpose with four parts, it doesn't make a difference, but it's the Great Commandment, the Royal Commandment (or the New Commandment), the Great Commission, and the Cultural Mandate. So here, these are the four purposes that apply to all men, and this is why we exist, to do these four things.

Let's take a look at the first one, Matthew 22:36:

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

The totality of your being! Every ounce of your energy, the sum of your strength. Bring that to loving God. Augustin said love God and do what you want. Jeremiah was out doing what prophets do one day, he was calling down burning sulfur and hellfire on all the sinners. The pastors of the churches, the priests of the synagogues back then, they don't like it so much when the prophets do this because the prophets are upsetting the sheep and the pastor, his calling is to do what? Calm the sheep! So one of them got really upset with Jeremiah and had him put in stocks overnight. The next day, they let him out and Jeremiah was lamenting to God. He said God I don't understand you! All I do all day long, every day, is exactly what you tell me to do! And what do I get? Insult! Reproach! These people hate my guts! Then in chapter 20 verse 9, he turns his attention to his own private journal, and he writes these words: but if I say I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name, his word is in my heart like a burning fire! Shut up in my bones! I am weary of holding it in! Indeed, I cannot! Now that's loving God! That's the kind of passion that we were created to have! To have that kind of passion, that kind of love for God!

Secondly, to love one another. John 13:34-35. It said at the end of the passage in Matthew to love your neighbor as yourself, but in John here it says: A new command I give to you: all men will know you are my disciples if you what? Perfect your theology! Theology is beautiful and important! All men will know you are my disciples if you can prove Christianity is true. All men will know you are my disciples if you can point out why the other guy is wrong in his theology. It doesn't say that does it? It says all men will know you are my disciples if you what? Love one another. So loving God, loving people. These are the two universal purposes that relate to our relationships, our being, who we are.

Then there are two more universal purposes that relate to our tasks, our mission, what we do. The first one is the Great Commission. Go and make disciples, leading people to Christ, helping them to grow in their faith, showing them how to abide in Christ, teaching them to love, teaching them to serve others, and of course to do that ourselves, beginning with our own families first.

Then the Cultural Mandate. This is God's command to tend the culture, to take care of his creation. This is where our families come in, our work comes in, our civic involvement, our participation in the governing processes. Every vocation is holy to the Lord. How many of you still carry a written Bible? How many of you have a concordance in those Bibles? Would some of you look up all the references to the word secular in there? Let's just see how many times the Bible uses the word secular. A couple of you do that for me and I'll get back to you on that. The idea here in the Cultural Mandate is that your job, for

example, it's not just a place that is a platform for you to do ministry. In other words, God does not intend for us to go to work and it be drudgery until the water break in the middle of the morning where we can stand around the cooler and talk about Jesus and how cool he is with our friends! Then we trudge through the rest of the morning until we can take somebody to lunch and share the love of Jesus Christ with them and witness to them and then go back to work... that's not how it works! Every vocation is holy to the Lord. If you're a waiter, everybody that sits down at your table is a divine appointment, an opportunity for you to express the character of Jesus Christ to those people, even if you never say a word about it! If you're a salesman, every appointment that you have is an opportunity to serve those people and give them what they need, the best value, to recommend what they need. If you're a manager, every time two of your employees have a conflict and they come to you and you sit them down to resolve it, that's a divine opportunity for you to show the reconciling power of the Gospel in our lives.

How many of you looked up the word secular for me? How many references did you find? Zero. Small concordance. How about you? Zero. You? Zero? Why? Because in the mind of God there is no such thing as secular work! There is no sacred/secular distinction in the mind of God. We create one, but in the mind of God everything we do is sacred, that's what the Cultural Mandate is all about! These are the four universal purposes that God has for all of us, for all men. These four universal purposes are a gift.

Turn with me to Philippians 2:13. God has a purpose for your life, he's created you to do things and the things that he has created you to do are a gift to us. Philippians 2:13:

¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

He has a purpose for your life and he's working in you to give you the desire and the power both to will and to do his good purpose. He has a purpose for your life and he's working in you to give you the desire and the power to do the good purpose, and these are the four parts of the universal purpose that he has for us. It's what he's created us to do and **I will feel most alive, most useful and most significant when I am doing what I was created to do.** That's why we exist in general.

Why do you exist?

Now why do you exist? There's also I said, a sense, and this is written down on that purpose outline, but there is also a sense in which each man is unique. God takes these four universals and he combines and particularizes them to each person so that there is a particular way that you can express loving God, loving people, the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate, and that's your personal life purpose. God set you at a certain time and place, let you live during a certain era. He's made you of a certain mental acuity, a certain physical form, a certain amount of aptitudes and abilities. You've gone to school and you have these acquired competencies, he's given you spiritual gifts, he has a calling on your life. All of these things are a collage or your personal life purpose, why you exist, your reason for being. A man can do nothing better than to wrestle with what God's purpose is for his life. Now an excellent way to do that is for you to have a written life purpose statement that would be based on a text of scripture that speaks deeply into that little torture chamber in your soul where you're wondering what is my purpose? So also on your tables is a worksheet for developing a written life purpose statement. Jesus had a personal life purpose. Luke 19:10: I came to seek and to save the lost. Paul had a purpose, Colossians 1:28-29: it was to present every man, every person mature in Christ, to bring people to spiritual maturity.

I've had a couple of life purposes. My first one was based on Philippians 3:10: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering. I was just in a time in my life where that was what I needed. I had sought the God that I wanted for so long, I needed to know the God who is! Just to show you how life purposes can change, not short term goals, but over longer horizons, maybe ten or twenty years. Your life purpose can change. You might have already fulfilled one of your life purposes, and you might be in a parenthesis. You might think you're stuck, but you might actually just be on the blank page between chapters in your life and you just need to wait on God to reveal the next level of purpose for your life.

Because I have these migraine headaches, which are now under control with medication, but there was a point in my life when I was living on two verses. I've talked about this here, when you get to your own personal testimony, I've read Spurgeon I can't remember how many times, but he said he gave his personal testimony I don't know, fifty times at his church over the course of his career. This is part of my story, but it's a big part of my story because my purpose for the last... In the same month we started this Bible Study, I changed my life purpose based on 1 Peter 4:1-2: now therefore he who suffers in his body is done with sin. You can look up the full verse, but he says he will not spend the rest of his earthly life chasing after evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. It just dawned on me one day, suffering is a gift! Suffering has been God's gift to me! he who suffers in his body is done with sin, as a result he will not spend the rest of his earthly life chasing after evil human desires but rather for the will of God. So I wrote in the front of my Bible in the month that we started this Bible Study: I will spend the rest of my earthly life for the will of God. That's my life purpose! If you've ever asked me to do anything and I hesitated, and you leaned on me to get me to do it anyway, I probably have said to you I will do anything God wants me to do but only that. Because it's just so much of who I am! I'm committed to spending the rest of my earthly life for the will of God! If God's not in it, I'm not interested. That's just the way it is! And of course the reason I have gotten to that place is because I have done it so much the other way! Seeking the God that I wanted. So the message for you would be to come to that place where you have your own personal gyroscope, your own personal compass, a written statement. Hopefully, preferably based on a scripture text that takes those four universal purposes and just combines them and distills them all down to this pithy statement of your personal life purpose. Understanding and living out God's purpose is how we satisfy our need to be significant. The Big Idea: **I will feel most alive, most useful, and most significant when I am doing what God created me to do.** Do you know what God has created you to do? I trust that most of you do, but I'm guessing that out of all the men that will hear this message that there are many who are confused, either because they've never known their purpose or they had a purpose once and now they've plateaued. Or you know your purpose and you decided to be a dropout. It's time to drop back in. Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our dearest Father, we come to you humbly. There is no way that we can ever be alive and useful and significant until we know what it is that you have created us to do, why we exist, what our purpose is in life. Lord, not just in the universal way, though we have to know that, but also in the personal and specific way, the personal life purpose that you have for each of us. Whether these men this morning, some of them have been confirmed in their life purpose, some of them have clarified their life purpose, some of them realize they need to work on this more carefully. Some of us now understand why we've been so frustrated meeting goals, because it hasn't been connected to a purpose, to a why. So Lord, whatever the case may be, I pray that you would superintend your Gospel, your grace, to each of these men and lead them to a clear understanding of what their purpose is, why they exist. Give them the joy of being alive, feeling useful, and being significant. We ask this in your name, amen!