



40 Days of Purpose

Pre-Campaign Study

Notes: This Bible Study is taken from the 40 Days of Purpose Pre-Campaign Sermon, "Don't Waste Your Life" by Rick Warren. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

I saw a bumper sticker once that said, "Life is too precious to waste". But how do we do that? What does Ephesians 5:15-17 have to say about how we may keep from wasting our lives?

Ephesians 5:15-17 (NLT) - "Be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do."

It says we should be "careful" how we live, so don't be careless. Literally in the Greek here it means "don't stumble through life; don't just drift through life". Think it through, know what you're here for, know your purpose and it says there, "make the most of every opportunity, be wise" and then it says, "try to understand what God wants you to do".

In preparation for the 40 days of purpose, let's consider three important questions of life... What does God want? What does it take? and why should I do it? Really, if you would have boiled your life down, those are the three important questions of life...

Question #1...

What does God want from my life?

What does God want from us?

When you read through the whole Bible, you can summarize it in just a few words... He wants **my whole life**. He wants my entire life...

Romans 6:13 (NLT) - Give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.

Note the use of the words "completely" and "whole body." It's either all, or nothing. It's either true, and that should determine the rest of your life, or you should just chuck it and go do whatever you want to do.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:24 (NIV), "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

Why is it impossible to serve both God and Money?

He's saying it is impossible to have two number one priorities in your life. You're always going to have a No.1, and everything else is going to be 2, 3, 4 and 5. You can't have two number one priorities.

What other kinds of priorities can you have that push God out from being number 1 in your life?

Work can push God out of First Place; play, sports, hobbies can push God out of First Place, friends can push God out of First Place in your life, school work can push God out of First Place in your life, dating can push God out of First Place in your life, even your own family can push God out of First Place in your life. Even though all these things are good, if they are first in your life, they are an idol, a god.

Question #2...

What does it take not to waste my life?

We can sum it up in one unpopular word: "**discipline.**"

Proverbs 10:17 - Whoever practices discipline, is on the way to life".

You cannot be a disciple without discipline.

Consider: 1 Timothy 4:7 (NASB) - "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." What is discipline?

Discipline is delayed gratification. Discipline is doing the difficult now, in order to enjoy the benefit later.

What kinds of areas are people generally disciplined in?

Some of you are very disciplined in your work, your career. You plan your day, you're always on time, you're conscientious in your work habits. Some of you are very disciplined in your physical workouts. You never miss a physical workout. It's in your routine, in your schedule. Some of you never miss a favorite T.V. show. I mean, you wouldn't think of missing it. And of course, many of us never miss a meal. People are disciplined in the things they think are important, they make these practices habits.

What does 1 Timothy 4:7 have to say about how we may develop spiritual discipline?

1 Timothy 4:7 (in the Living Bible) – “Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit”.

Keep spiritually fit. There are exercises you can do that will keep you spiritually fit, just like there are exercises you can do that will keep you physically fit.

What does Hebrews 12:1 have to say about what kind of practice can help us be spiritual fit?

Hebrews 12:1 (NLT) – “Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress”.

Notice the words “weight” and “sin”. Those are two things that hold you back. There are two things that keep you from being all that God wants you to be. There are two things that limit your potential in life. There are two things that waste your life.

What is sin?

We know what sins are...breaking one of the commandments of God.

So what’s a “weight”?

A weight is something that’s not necessarily wrong; it’s just not necessary. There’re some things in life that are not necessarily wrong; they’re just not necessary.

What kinds of things can be weights in our lives?

It could be a relationship, it could be an expectation, it could be an activity, it could be a club, it could be a memory that you refuse to let go of, it could be a fear, it could be a job.

So what are the implications of letting go of weights, how do we do this?

To grow, I must learn to say no. You can’t say, “yes” to everything. You have to say “no” to some things. You have to say “no” often to good things in order to have time for the best things.

Why do we have a hard time letting go of certain things and saying no to them?

One of the reasons we have a hard time letting go of activities is we tie our identity to them.

If we’re going to make more time for God in our lives, how can we do it?

If we are serious about fulfilling our purpose in life, we have to make space for God in our lives. And if you’re going to make space for God in your life, you’re going to have to cut some stuff out... some good stuff, not just sin.

Here I am talking about saying no to some things and now we are talking about adding something to your busy schedule in the next 40 days... a daily devotional reading of about 15 minutes a day, which will help you understand God’s purposes of your life. If this is a problem, what can you do?

You may need to ask, “What am I going to stop doing?”

Any time you take on a new habit, a new skill, a new commitment you should say, “What am I not going to do?” There’s always a cost of putting God first in your schedule, but the rewards are worth it.

Luke 10:40-42 gives us another discipline to consider as we go into this 40 Days of Purpose, what is it?

Luke 10:40-42 (NRSV) - “Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; but there is need of only one thing and Mary has chosen the better part...”

This addresses the discipline of putting first things first.

This passage talks about a couple of friends of Jesus, Mary and Martha, who are sisters. Jesus had come to visit at their home. What was Martha’s problem?

The Bible says, “Martha was distracted by her many tasks”. As Rick Warren said, Martha had spiritual ADD.

What was Mary doing that was better than Martha’s good things?

Mary had chosen the better activity... Jesus said, “If it comes down to spending time with me, or washing the dishes, there’s no competition”.

We need to ask ourselves, do we find ourselves like Martha? Do tasks on our to-do lists distract us from focusing on God? Is your life so busy, you don’t have time to stop, even for 40 Days and focus on God?

How does the phrase, “Mary has chosen the better part” tell us what we need to do ourselves to spend time with God?

This phrase makes it clear that spending time with God is a choice we make. We will make the time to grow close to God if we make that choice. Like Mary, we can choose the better part...

Psalms 39:6 in the New Living Translation says, “All our busy rushing, ends in nothing”.

How is Proverbs 10:27 true?

Proverbs 10:27, in the Living Bible – “reverence for the Lord adds hours to each day”.

Put God first, and He says, “I’ll bring everything else into focus”. Having the right focus can save you time, you don’t burn time spinning your wheels on the wrong things.

What can a person do who does not feel disciplined enough to develop good spiritual growth habits?

Look to God for help, check out Philippians 2:13:

Philippians 2:13 (TEV) - “God is always at work in you, to make you willing and able to obey His own purpose”.

What does it mean that God will make us both willing and able?

God not only gives us the desire, He also gives us the willpower. “Not by might, not by power, but my Spirit says the Lord.” I believe that if you get serious and you make the choice to put some stuff on hold, to put God first, to focus on God’s purpose for you in the next 40 Days, God will help you and you’ll find amazing things happening in your life.

Alright, a quick review... What does God want?

He wants all of you, every part of you.

What’s it going to take to grow?

It’s going to take discipline.

Question #3...

Why should I discipline myself to grow spiritually?

There are many benefits and we can spend the rest of the day just talking about those. Benefits today in your life right now, and benefits forever in eternity.

But even if there were no benefits, there is one important reason why we ought to do everything we can to grow spiritually anyway, what is this?

The Cross... Jesus gave His life completely for us and He expects our lives in return.

2 Corinthians 5:15 (NIV) – “He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again”.

What does it mean that we should no longer live for ourselves?

We were bought for a price... we should no longer live our lives just for ourselves. To live our lives to the fullest means that we live for Him, who died for us. We recognize that we can never bring the kind of fulfillment or joy to our lives that He can bring to us. And so we serve Him.

Why did Jesus leave heaven and come to earth to die in our place?

He didn’t have to do that. He did that because He loved us. He did that because He wants us to enjoy His purposes in our lives.

What does Romans 12:1 tell us about why we should discipline ourselves to grow spiritually?

Romans 12:1 (GW) - “Brothers and sisters, in view of all we have just shared about God’s compassion, I encourage you offer your bodies as living sacrifices, dedicated to God and pleasing to Him”.

It cost Jesus to die for us and it’s going to cost us to live for Him. But He deserves it, because we would have no destiny if it weren’t for the Cross. But because of the Cross, you will live forever and you owe Him your life.

Rick Warren has chosen Habakkuk 3:2 (NCV) as the theme verse for 40 Days – “*Lord, I have heard the news about you; I am amazed at what you have done. Lord, do great things once again in our time; make those things happen again in our own days*”. Let’s make this verse our prayer and commit ourselves to spending just a little bit more time than usual learning about God’s plan for us.

I also want you to pray about who you can invite to be a part of this Bible study, invite them and bring them with you if necessary.