

Talks – Your Life. Your Purpose. God's Direction – myfishbites.com

Intro

Again, this is quite a hefty talk. You may want to break this down into at least 2 weeks / 2 sessions, if not more! It also borrows a bit from the Christmas III session.

YOUR LIFE. YOUR PURPOSE. GOD'S DIRECTION.

Have you ever felt out of place? I once went to visit a university with a friend and went to a party. I didn't know anyone, my mate went off and people were just drinking. I just felt out of place. Fortunately, someone started playing NBA basketball. I joined in and it saved the day!

Many Christians wonder why they're here and what their purpose is. Yes, we all know the purpose generally, but how do we find out the specifics? In an American survey of people stopped on the streets, they asked what one thing would you ask God? The question that 37% of people responded with was; what is my purpose?

We need to know that anything we do has to line up with the Bible. Anything outside of the Bible's boundaries God put there to protect us, is a no-go area. Don't even consider it. The Bible tells us to cast down everything that sets itself up against God. It tells us to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Jesus.

2 Corinthians 10.4-5, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Satan wants to destroy you. Don't let him. James 4.7 tells us to do 2 things. Firstly we submit to God. Then secondly, we resist the devil and he will flee from us. The Bible has not changed. God wrote the Bible outside of time, for all time. But outside of this truth, it seems a distant hope to find God's will, right? Wrong.

1. We are here to glorify God. Ephesians 2.10 says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

2. We are here to love God. At the council of Jerusalem debating whether God was reaching out to Gentiles as well as Jews, James spoke up and said: "The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself."

3. We are here to serve God and by default, others. 2 Corinthians 3.2-3 from Paul, "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written

not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

But what about me?!

OK, so we know this kind of stuff and know that this leads to God using us. But what am I going to do? I'm not being selfish. But what about me?!

Everyone wants to feel valued. In this big world, we can sometimes get lost. When I went to New York, I got lost in one of the underground stations called Canal Street. It spanned the 4 corners of a fairly large and busy road so it seemed easier to stay underground. But time after time I found myself popping up in the wrong place. It was only when I decided to go to ground level and walk across the street that I found my way. Often, finding God's will seems very hard. But the reality is it's fairly simple.

God has paid for you with a great price and loves you deeply. So we need to focus our time, efforts and love first and foremost on him. Song of Songs can be understood as a multi-layered book of the Bible with language that seem more sexual than an episode of Desperate Housewives, but it is also a beautiful image of God's love for his church. And what is the story of history? In a very real sense it is a romance with God the Father looking for a bride for his Son – the church. Revelation lets us know that Jesus is coming back for a bride who is ready.

So first and foremost, we are to seek after God and allow him to change us into his image. This is so important that without this, nothing else fits into place. This starts from a place of saying, “God, take all that I am, all that I do. I fully submit to you. I give myself to you completely.” Then the hard work comes in living this life. But you can add God's help to your diligence. He loves you so deeply that as you seek him and grow closer to him, your will becomes entwined with his will. You hear his voice more as you recognise it, you spend time with him which gives you extra time and energy and you know his will more deeply.

1. Offer your bodies to God as living sacrifices

Romans 12.1-2 – “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual (or reasonable) act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

So part one is clear. To know God's will, we offer our bodies as living sacrifices that are holy and pleasing to God. We no longer do things as the world does, but we allow God to transform and renew our minds to think, act and see like he does. Then, in this place, we can test and approve what God's will is in 3 progressive steps – God's good will, his pleasing will and his perfect will. But the promise comes with the price tag of giving our bodies completely to God and being holy and pure.

2. Trust all you do to God and to believe that he will lead you.

Proverbs 3.5 – “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight (direct your paths).”

This is the pattern we need to follow. We trust in God (that means we believe his Word and that he knows best for our lives). We do this with all our heart and don't think that we know it all, or follow our own way of thinking. Nor do we flow with the world's way of doing things. Instead, we commit everything we do to God – that means praying about stuff we do before and as we're doing it. So before we do anything, we offer it up to God – “God, I'm going out tonight. Please use me and protect me... Father I can't decide what college to go to, please show me... Lord, I need a parking space...” etc.

If we commit what we do to God, then it's like saying, ‘God I want you to be in charge of this.’ And he promises that he will direct you and lead you, and that your path will be straight. It may not feel like a straight path, but when you arrive at the other end and look back, you'll see it was. This is a lifestyle that thanks God for what he does, gives God the credit and knows that whatever's been given and committed to him means that God will take responsibility for it.

3. Know that God wants to be found by you.

Thirdly, God doesn't hide his face from his people. If God wants you to do something, he will make it very clear. God wants us to ask him, to find him. And he wants to do good things for you – to give you good gifts!

Matthew 10.7-8 says, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Jeremiah 29.11-14 says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD...”

God's plan for you is to prosper and not harm you, to give you hope and a future. Our finding God's plan means that we call on him, come to him, pray to him and find God when we seek him with all of our heart. Then, we will find God.

So we find 3 consecutive stages of looking to God – asking, seeking and knocking. When seeking God's guidance we ask him; we seek him; and then we knock on some doors. As my youth pastor friend used to say. “I pray to God and then I go and kick on some doors. If I kick them down, I know God's opened the door.” Your approach may be a bit more gentle, but you get the idea! We have a part to play. I was looking for a Bible verse recently. I asked God to bring it to mind. God brought Romans 4 to mind, but I still couldn't find the verse. So I asked God and looked at a book I'd read recently – in there, I found the verse – Romans 4.21.

2 Peter 1.3-4 says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

From reading this, we know that God has given us his Word to give us everything we need in life through our knowledge of him (by reading and receiving the Word in our hearts and lives). This gives us God's very great and precious promises to be like him and to live Godly, not worldly lives. So, believing God wants to be found by you takes the action of knowing his Word.

4. Know that God longs to give good gifts to his children

But the Bible doesn't stop with ask, seek find. Matthew 7.9-11 says: "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

So Jesus is saying which of your fathers would give his son a stone if he asked for bread, or a snake if he asked for fish! God has made a way for you to come right in to the holy place before him with confidence. Hebrews 4.16 says, *"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."* God sometimes hides his face so that you have to exercise faith and seek him more deeply. God did this with Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 32.31 where *'God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart'*. God often makes us wait, but he wants to be found by you and encourages us to come before him with confidence. Hebrews 11.6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." So today, believe that God wants the best for you and your life and wants you to know and to find his will for you!

5. Ask for wisdom. And believe God. James 1.2-8:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does."

In the Old Testament, God used Solomon to build a physical temple. Today, God is building a church, a bride and he is working on you specifically by building your faith and your perseverance. As you allow God to do this, he will make you into a person that is increasingly complete / an all-round man or woman of God. But there are times where we lack wisdom to make tough decisions. In this place, we ask God. He will give generously to anyone who asks. But then, we have to believe God.

So often God speaks something and then a voice whispers in your head to come against what God has spoken. But God asks us to trust him, believe him. Yep we'll doubt but faith is described by King James version in Hebrews 11.1 as, *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Another great definition of faith that God showed me is Romans 4.21, *"being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."*

What is in your heart, what is your dream? If you don't have a focus then you will aim and hit nothing. One of my problems in life has been an apparent lack of focus. But I know what's in my heart – to build a relevant, creative and radical church. I want to see people trained to work in politics, the media and the church. That's my dream. What's yours?

6. If you walk with God and stay connected to him, your will is his will

And remember, God makes it clear in lots of places in the Bible that when we put him first, other things fall into place. You see, we often get caught up in asking God what he wants us to do and he just says to us – walk with me and do what you do. That's my will. If I need you to do anything specific, I'll let you know.

Psalm 37.3-7 says this: "Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes."

God says firstly, trust him and do good; secondly, make your home somewhere, get involved in a church and serve God; third, delight in God and then your desires match up with his desires. In time, as you commit your way to God, he will be the one who fulfils your desires and will make you a person filled with him. Sometimes we'll need to wait for God's fulfillment, but he will do it. But how big is the dream in your heart? The bigger it is, the more God has to work with!

A friend of mine told me that when he was married, his wife got pregnant and they needed money for the baby on the way. As he prayed to God, God asked him to give money into God's work regularly. My friend said that he always got back double what he gave. You see, my friend put God first and then God looked after my friend, his wife and baby. And he'll do exactly the same for you.

In 715BC, Hezekiah rose up as King over Judah. His name meant, 'The Lord has strengthened.' He was 25 and ruled for 29 years. His father, Ahaz, had done evil in the eyes of God. But Hezekiah was different and key was probably his mother, Abijah or Abi. But Hezekiah started to obey God and purify Jerusalem, by consecrating the temple, the priests, Levites and the people. He smashed down the idols and high places where worship had been made to other gods. He also smashed the bronze serpent Moses had made, which had become an item of worship. He brought back the Passover and defended Jerusalem against Sennacherib and the Assyrian armies, with his petition to God seeing the angel of the Lord destroy 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.

2 Chronicles 31.20-21 – "This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered."

Hezekiah's testimony is incredible and he should be seen as one of the heroes of the Old Testament. 'He sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered.' What a testimony and what a clear message that as we seek God and do our part, he takes what we have and are and prospers it. What did Hezekiah do? He obeyed God in the place where God had called him. He did what was good, right and faithful before God and then he did his part. And he prospered. This is God's will for you, too.

7. Colossians 3.15 – let peace rule in your hearts

One of the final umpires in hearing from God is peace. Colossians 3.15: *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."*

The Amplified Bible says, "And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds, in that peaceful state] to which as [members of Christ's] one body you were also called [to live]. And be thankful (appreciative), [giving praise to God always]."

In a football match, there is a referee. The job of the referee is to make decisions. If a tackle flies in, the ref has to make a call – is it a foul or a free kick, should the player be booked or let off? The Bible tells us to allow 'peace' to do the same thing with our decisions. Let peace be an umpire between doing one thing or another.

This is not the same kind of peace that the world thinks about, is a deep inner resting and confidence in God. And it can be hard to have this peace and keep it!

In John 14.27 Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

If you need to make a decision about something, push past any worry or fear you may have and spend time in God's presence. Then wait and keep in prayer. Peace will often let you

know what the right way is. If you don't feel that deep peace, don't do anything. God will show you and protect you. I once went for a youth work job and it was clear that things weren't quite right. A little while later I heard that the project lost its funding it should have had, and the church youth worker had left.

Philippians 4.4-7, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

A case study – George Muller

There was a famous man of God called George Muller from Bristol in England. God had turned his life around and he'd seen the example of people depend entirely on God to finance work for God, and who'd received complete provision by God. He and his wife started taking in 30 girls in 1836 and gradually the work increased. By 1870, more than 2,000 children were being accommodated in five homes. Not once did Muller ask for financial support, nor did he get into debt. This was despite the fact that even back then, the homes cost £100,000 to build. Muller fed the children, there were times of Bible reading and prayer, he dressed them well and got them apprenticeships and scholarships. Day after day, as Muller sought God and committed his way to God, God provided for the orphanages in incredible and miraculous ways.

[Wikipedia reports that](#), "In 1871 an article in *The Times* stated that since 1836, 23,000 children had been educated in the schools and very many thousands had been educated in other schools at the expense of the orphanage. The article also states that since its origin, 64,000 Bibles, 85,000 Testaments and 29,000,000 religious books had been issued and distributed. Other expenses included the support of 150 missionaries.."

The Promises from God to you

Your call may be different to Muller – but Hebrews 13.8 says, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*"

In Acts 10.34-35 it says, "And Peter opened his mouth and said: Most certainly and thoroughly I now perceive and understand that God shows no partiality and is no respecter of persons, But in every nation he who venerates and has a reverential fear for God, treating Him with worshipful obedience and living uprightly, is acceptable to Him and sure of being received and welcomed [by Him]." (Amplified Bible).

God is faithful and true, and his promises are true. "*For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*" (2 Corinthians 1.20).

Prayer and Response

What is God saying to you as a result of this? Do you need to know God's will for your life? Is there anything you need to hear from God?

In the quiet now, take time to get right with God, then present your requests and prayers to God with thanksgiving. Now just wait on God.

Now let's worship...