

GREGORY L. JANTZ, PhD
WITH KEITH WALL

Find Your Purpose *in* Life

Live Each Day with Passion and Clarity



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INTRODUCTION

The Key to a Satisfying Life

Perhaps you've heard it said that the two most important days in a person's life are the day they were born and the day they discover why they were born.

It's an exhilarating process to discover your purpose in life—why you were born. Almost everyone knows the day they were born, and they celebrate it every year. But many people never discover *why* they were put on earth at this point in time. They drift from one opportunity to another, one situation to another, without a clear sense of direction or focus.

Nearly all of us have asked ourselves, "What am I doing with my life? What is my reason for existing? How can I live with meaning and significance?" Some people are easily able to answer these questions and enjoy a life guided and motivated by a compelling purpose. Many

others, however, struggle with these questions for years and never discover their God-given calling.

The truth is, if you want to be content, it's essential to discover your passion. Without a clear purpose to guide you, all your activity and ambitions will not ultimately bring fulfillment.

Before we go any further, I want to set the foundation by sharing truths that I believe with absolute conviction:

- You have a mission and a calling. Your life has meaning because you were born for a particular “why”—an indispensable reason for being on earth.
- You were created with God-given talents and skills to live out your purpose.
- You can live a fully energized life, knowing you are contributing significantly to the people closest to you and the larger world around you.
- You have enough and are enough to reach your full potential and become the person God intends you to be.

With these truths in mind, let me ask you: Have you determined your purpose—your *why*—for being on Planet Earth? If it is just to “enjoy the ride,” then it won’t

really matter much what you do with your life. You'll just coast along, hoping things will somehow work out. Or if you want to become wealthy or have status, you'll make it your ambition to climb the career ladder—whether or not it represents your true calling.

On the other hand, when you believe that God created you with a unique purpose, you'll want to know how to live out that mission consistently and effectively. If you have any doubt that your life has meaning, let these words from Scripture sink into your heart and mind: "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). A different translation uses this language: "We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (NLT).

When you seek to align your thoughts with God's will, you'll begin to recognize his calling for your life and the way he equipped you to fulfill it. You are his "handiwork" and "masterpiece," fully equipped to carry out the plans

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he has for your life. Living with purpose, direction, and conviction means that you won't wonder where time has gone, regret missed opportunities, or question what your life has amounted to.

Let me share another encouraging Scripture passage, one of my all-time favorites and the theme for the Seattle-based mental health program I founded, The Center: A Place of Hope. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah spoke this message from the Lord: "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" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Though recorded centuries ago, these words are just as relevant today. God does indeed have plans for you and me. Clarifying our purpose enables us to envision a joyful, gratifying, hope-filled future. We can wake up each morning with enthusiasm and energy for the day ahead, and we can go to sleep each night with the satisfaction of knowing we used our gifts to enrich others.

A clear sense of purpose creates meaning in your life that guides your daily decisions, influences your behavior, shapes your goals, and inspires you to service. In the pages ahead, we'll explore these areas, looking closely at ...

- **The power of purpose.** You'll discover the many ways a clear direction in life will benefit you—and others.
- **The many pathways of purpose.** For some people, purpose is focused solely on their vocation—meaningful, satisfying work. But a wholistic perspective recognizes that purpose applies to many aspects of life, including family relationships, friendships, community involvement, spiritual pursuits, and creative endeavors.
- **How to find your purpose.** We'll ask probing questions and discuss specific steps you can take to fuel your imagination and pinpoint your path forward.

At the end, we've included an additional set of activities and exercises to sharpen your focus and set a new trajectory. The goal is not to overhaul your life overnight, but to foster, hone, and update your sense of purpose little by little.

You have come to this book seeking help in finding your purpose—or to update your purpose as you enter a new season filled with fresh challenges and opportunities. Consider me your guide, supporter, and cheerleader as you create a vision for an inspiring adventure ahead.



CHAPTER 1

The Power of Purpose

Darla came to The Center at the urging of her two grown children, who knew she had been battling clinical depression for several years. And a fierce battle it had been!

Like most people struggling with deep depression, Darla had endured low energy, insomnia, and lack of motivation for the pursuits that previously brought her joy. By her own admission, she had been *existing* but not really *living* for a long time.

Complicating matters, for twelve years Darla had been raising her son and daughter completely on her own, ever since her husband had walked out and abruptly filed for divorce. He had often neglected to make child-custody payments, forcing Darla to become the primary breadwinner for her family. She served as a cook, house

cleaner, tutor, coach, taxi driver, and confidant for her children. What's more, for several years Darla was driving forty-five minutes each way to help her elderly parents, who suffered from chronic ailments.

Then there was her work. As a full-time executive assistant to the vice president of technology for a large software company, her role meant managing dozens of details, including her boss's schedule, correspondence, presentations, and reports. Worse, her boss was eager to make demands and dispense criticisms, but reluctant to offer compliments and encouragement.

"I felt like I was continually babysitting this man," she told me. "He had a brilliant mind for technology, but practically no organizational or people skills. I stuck with that job for eight years because it paid well and came with great benefits. I had the expenses of raising kids and rent to pay, so I made a decision to gut it out. I felt constantly frazzled and miserable."

No wonder Darla ended up exhausted and depleted! Human beings can bear heavy burdens for short periods of time, but when those burdens are present every day, year after year, something has to give. You might be able to lug a two-hundred-pound backpack up a small hill and make it. But if you carry that weight up the side of mountain, eventually your knees are going to buckle and you're going to collapse.

When Darla's youngest child went off to college, she finally had the time and resources to take care of herself and focus on her own wellbeing. With help from my team at The Center, Darla began to recover: She started to process her anger and embittered feelings (especially toward her ex) that had festered for years; improved her nutrition; developed a sleep routine to achieve ample rest; established an exercise regimen; reconnected with her spiritual life; renewed friendships that had waned; and discovered new pursuits that would bring happiness. Ultimately—and most importantly—Darla found renewed purpose in life.

For years, Darla's number one purpose had been to singlehandedly raise two kids—at the same time she was caring for elderly parents and striving to be a responsible



employee at a high-stress job. Now, with both kids grown, it was Darla's turn to think about her future. She began brainstorming and dreaming about the kind of life that would help her feel energized and alive.

By the time she finished her treatment program, Darla had begun answering questions and completing exercises to help clarify her path forward. I knew that recovering from depression and regaining her sense of purpose would require time, since there are no magic formulas or quick fixes for either challenge. But I was confident Darla was taking solid steps toward a healthy, bright future.

Now fast-forward one year later, when Darla stopped in to share an update. Besides maintaining all the healthy practices she had learned for replenishing her body, mind, and spirit, she had made the bold choice to quit her stressful job with the software company and pursue one that brought more satisfaction.

"I am now the assistant director for a nonprofit that serves low-income single mothers and their children," she told us. "Many of these mothers are from domestic-abuse situations or other painful circumstances, and these courageous women are trying hard to rebuild their lives. They want to create a stable, hopeful situation for themselves and their children."

Darla comes alongside these women to find community resources for housing, food assistance, legal aid, employment, and more. Most important, she has daily opportunities to offer encouragement and support to struggling families.

“Even though my title is assistant director, I like to think of myself as the CEO: Chief Encouragement Officer. God is using my years as an overwhelmed single mother, and my journey through depression, to empathize with these hurting women and to help them in practical ways.”

Darla shared that she took a significant salary reduction for her current role, but added, “The pay cut wasn’t easy at first, but now it really doesn’t matter because my life is so much richer in so many ways.”

She concluded her update with sincerity in her voice. “I found my purpose after trudging through life for years. As I left the office last Friday night, I stopped and said a prayer of gratitude: “Thank you, God, for leading me to this place and this situation. I have never felt so fulfilled in my life. And I have never felt so grateful.”



Too often, we live our lives feeling like spectators instead of active participants with the power to choose our own course. We get caught up in life's flow, whether it's good, bad, or neutral. Wherever the currents take us, that's the direction we go. It's as though we are navigating on autopilot, aimless and adrift.

This is a classic *whatever* approach to life—"whatever happens, happens"—and it may be uncomfortably

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familiar to you. The *whatever* mode lets life happen to and around you, come what may. Time passes quickly and, before you realize it, you catch yourself wondering, *What have I been doing? What have I accomplished?* As you look back over your life to date, have you lacked a general target, an inspirational *why* that brings you joy and fuels you to better yourself and your world?

Without a clear *why*—your driving passion and the reason for getting up in the morning—you will continue to live like an archer who

is shooting at nothing in particular, firing one arrow after another that randomly lands wherever gravity

pulls it to. Unless you take intentional action, chances are that circumstances won't force you to change for the positive. If you go along waiting for some "thing," some event to change your status quo, you'll probably be disappointed. But knowing your *why* will help you grow from a reactive approach to a proactive lifestyle. It's time to take control and actively and intentionally participate in the course of your life.

All of us want to echo Darla's words: "I have never felt so fulfilled in my life. And I have never felt so grateful." We want to sense that we're using our time and talents to the fullest. We want to know we're living in harmony with God's plan for our lives. We want to be assured that the investments we've made in people and pursuits have truly mattered. In other words, we want to know our *why*; we want to find our purpose.

When you discover your purpose, you'll experience the reward of many blessings flowing into your life. In the pages that follow, we'll look at ten benefits of finding your purpose.

1. YOU'LL FIND YOUR CALLING

Many people hear the word *purpose* and think it applies only to grand, world-changing work. Not necessarily. I define purpose as the *one unique thing* we each have to offer, no matter how big or small. It's a matter of

investing your gifts and talents to benefit a nation or a neighborhood, a community or a classroom, an entire company or a single child.

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Finding your purpose leads to your unique calling.

Your personal purpose may be to raise healthy children or invest in the lives of your grandchildren. It may be to help homeless people get off the streets and back on their feet. It might be to create art that inspires others. Finding a clear sense of purpose will be unique for everyone—and what you identify as your path will be different from the course that others take. What's more, your purpose will likely shift

and change throughout life in response to evolving priorities and changing circumstances. The possibilities are endless, and only you can know which one best fits at any particular season of your life.