

LIVING HOLY

Life Application: Learning God's plan and specific purpose for us, and then investing our energies into fulfilling that mission to the best of our abilities.

Key Verse for Meditation: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. – Ephesians 2:10

Focus Scriptures: Proverbs 3:6; Ecclesiastes 3:1; John 1:19-28; 1 Corinthians 3:6-15; 12:4-11; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Peter 4:10; 1 John 3:16-19

Holiness in Purpose

As a Quaker wife in the early 1800s, Elizabeth Gurney Fry's days were filled with household duties. She had been converted in 1798, and though her formerly worldly lifestyle had changed, she felt burdened in spirit because she was not "a useful instrument" for God. In 1812, she wrote in her diary, "I fear that my life is slipping away to little purpose."

God saw the hunger in her heart. In 1813, a Quaker minister from America told her of visiting some prisons, and how horrified he was by the conditions in the women's prison at Newgate. The very next day, she went to Newgate,

The Angel of Newgate Prison



where her ministry began with a humble request to the prison governor: "Sir, if thee kindly allows me to pray with the women [prisoners], I will go inside." The governor warned her that the women inmates were wild and savage, and she would be in physical danger. However, she persisted with her request, and eventually permission was granted.

Once inside, Elizabeth was horrified to observe the deplorable conditions in which the women existed. Hundreds of women and their children were crowded into the prison, many sleeping on the floor without nightclothes or bedding.



Lesson Key: As Christians who are set apart for God and dedicated to His service, God "owns" us. We choose to put Him at the center of our lives, recognizing that a purpose in life flows out of a core intimacy with God and that a truly meaningful life will be found in fulfilling God's specific plan for us. We commit ourselves to using the aptitudes and skills He has given us in the advancement of His Kingdom.

She realized immediately that her ministry would involve much more than prayer. She enlisted women to make garments for the infants. With the help of friends, she brought warm clothing, straw for bedding, and food for the starving and naked inmates.

In time, Elizabeth broadened her efforts. In an attempt to eradicate the “vicious idleness” that had become a way of life behind the prison walls, she concentrated her efforts on employment and education. At the request of the inmates, she began a school for their children, and provided materials so the prisoners could

learn to sew, knit, and make goods for sale. She organized other women in the community into a group who took turns visiting the prison and reading the Bible to prisoners.

So effective were Elizabeth’s efforts that the notorious Newgate facility became a showcase for prison reform. Although this dedicated woman was recognized worldwide for her self-giving Christian ministry, she always pointed to God as her Source, saying, “Nothing short of the Holy Spirit can really help forward the cause of righteousness on earth.”



“I used to ask God to help me. Then I asked if I might help Him. I ended up by asking Him to do His work through me.” – *James Hudson Taylor, missionary to China*



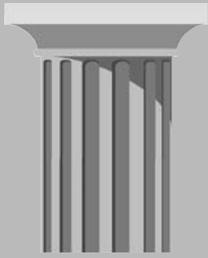
For Personal Study

1. It is God’s will for us to be holy (see 1 Thessalonians 4:3,7). How will a basis of holiness affect our life plans and purposes?

2. How should we go about discovering what God’s purpose is for our lives? See Romans 12:1-2.

3. In Romans 1:7 and 1 Corinthians 1:2, we read that believers are called to be “saints.” The word *saints* is translated from the Greek word *hagios* meaning “holy; pure.” Elsewhere in Scripture, *hagios* is also translated as *hallowed*. What conclusion can we draw from this with regard to our calling?

4. How is a life without a goal like a boat without a rudder? (See James 3:4.) What are some other analogies that make a similar comparison?



Bible Background

Greek architecture was a source of pride for the people of Corinth. This is why Paul chose to use a building analogy in 1 Corinthians 3:6-15 to demonstrate the need for the various strengths and gifts within the Corinthian body of believers to complete the Gospel structure.

Christians must work together to further the Gospel, but at some point, our work will be judged individually. The effectiveness and the true nature of every task undertaken for God will be openly displayed. Paul states that “every man’s work shall be made manifest.” Three verbs are used to describe this revelation: *declare*, *reveal*, and *try*. To declare is to make plain or evident. To reveal is to disclose or uncover. To try (or test) is to determine whether something is genuine or false.

When our purpose is in fulfillment of God’s call on our lives—when we have undertaken it at His direction and through His empowerment, and have fulfilled it to the best of our abilities—we can be sure it will endure the evaluation of God and we will receive our reward!

A Song With a Message

It was the 1930s, and business trends were still headed downward. There was rumor of upcoming salary cuts at the New York insurance office where a twenty-two-year-old clerk worked. Possessor of a deep, melodious voice, the young man was offered a radio contract. There was opportunity for fame and great financial gain if he would agree to regular performance on a secular program.

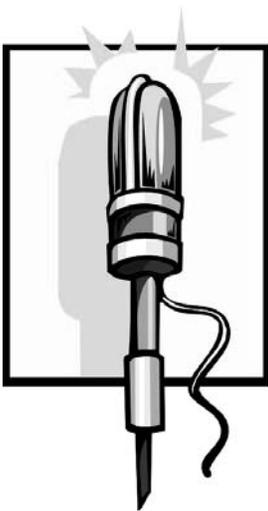
The young man had been pondering the matter for several days when he sat down at the piano early one Sunday to rehearse a hymn he was to sing in church. As he played, his mother brought him a piece of paper on which was written a poem by Rhea Miller. A Christian woman, she knew of the offer her son was pondering, and she desperately wanted him to be fully consecrated to God’s plan for his life. Her son scanned the words on the paper before him.

*I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold,
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands,
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.
Than to be the king of a vast domain,
Or be held in sin's dread sway.
I'd rather have Jesus than anything,
This world affords today.
I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame,
I'd rather be true to His holy name.*

In a few moments, his fingers unconsciously left the tune he was rehearsing and began to find the melody which is known today to millions.

The words hit their mark. The young man turned down the secular contract, and a short time later he was offered a position with a Chicago radio station where he could sing the Gospel songs he loved. While there, he met Billy Graham—and that was the beginning of his sixty-year association with the Billy Graham evangelistic outreach.

When the rich voice of George Beverly Shea is but a memory, Christians around the world will continue to be challenged and inspired by his song, “I’d Rather Have Jesus.”





Paul’s letter to the church at Colosse included this personal message, “And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it” (Colossians 4:17). We know little about this man except that Paul regarded him as a fellow soldier in God’s service. What was his ministry—his service for God—that he was to “take heed to”? The answer is lost in history, but Paul’s

admonition to him remains as a challenge to us.

What task or ministry has God given us? It may not be preaching. We do not find any particular indication that Archippus was a minister. Our ministry may not even be anything seen by men, but God notes how we respond to the tasks He gives us.

Whatever assignment we have been given, we must take heed by keeping our eyes on that call and not allowing anything to hinder our attention to it. The enemy of our souls may try to sidetrack us, make us too busy to concentrate on our tasks, or attempt to discourage us, but God would have us fulfill (the original word means “to complete”) the assignments He has entrusted to us.

Notice that Paul writes that Archippus’ ministry was received “in the Lord.” Perhaps you are not sure what your ministry in the Lord is. God has placed each one of us in a specific environment and set of circumstances. That is where our ministry is! Somewhere in our daily schedule, in the places where we spend our waking hours, among the people we meet and associate with, there is a ministry for us. It is important to pray and ask God exactly how He would have us reach out to others where we are. Remember, He has given each of us a unique combination of abilities and assets. Let us use them to serve and honor Him.



Our God-ordained purpose will revolve around abilities and

interests God has put in our hearts.

An elderly widow, restricted in her activities, was eager to serve Christ. After praying about this, she realized that she could bring blessing to others by playing the piano. The next day she placed this small ad in the Oakland Tribune: “Pianist will play hymns by phone daily for those who are sick and despondent—the service is free.” The notice included the number to dial. When people called, she would ask, “What hymn would you like to hear?” Within a few months, her playing had brought cheer to several hundred people. Many of them freely poured out their hearts to her, and she was able to help and encourage them.

What an example!

5. We know that people such as missionaries and pastors have holy vocations—their job descriptions revolve around reaching out to the lost. But what about secular jobs? What are practical ways to make a secular job an opportunity for ministry? See Colossians 3:17, 22-24.

6. In context of our life’s purpose, we sometimes speak of having a “vision,” or the “big picture” of opportunities in the Gospel. What are some ways we might be able to develop our vision for the Gospel? Use Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; Matthew 6:33, 7:7-8; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 4:10 to formulate your answer.

7. What is the outcome of committing ourselves to fulfilling God’s purpose in our lives?
