

Discovering Connectedness, Purpose and Hope – Part II

Introductions – Welcome. Do we have any new participants? Please share who and from where? Question: Where did you meet your mate, and was it love at first sight? Or are you still looking, and where do you look?

Opening Prayer

Suggestions, some basic ground rules to remember in a small group

There is an art to listening. In a small group, we respect one another's opinions and listen carefully so the speaker feels heard.

There is an art to sharing in a small group. We take turns and try not to monopolize the conversation. Try to speak from the heart and share openly and honestly.

There is an art to NOT gossiping in a small group. When someone shares something raw, personal, or difficult, it stays in the group. If not, trust is quickly squandered.

Background

Studies show people with purpose live healthier, wealthier, happier, and longer.¹ If true, why do so many people live in quiet desperation and sadness? Perhaps you don't. Maybe you're an exception to the multitude of psychological studies out today. Many people struggle when wrestling with an answer to the question: What's your purpose for living? Chapter five talks about building relationships and how our purpose for living intersects with our relationships.

Open It

- 1) If you have a long-term mate or partner, what keeps you together? What pulls you apart?
- 2) If you've experienced long-term relationships that disconnected, how did that happen?
- 3) If you have children, how did you decide to have them? If you don't, how did you decide not to have them?
- 4) What is the purpose of marriage? How do you keep a marriage relationship vital?
- 5) In chapter five of *Hard Questions*, I discuss marriage expectations. Did long-standing traditions influence your marriage ceremony? Once you were married, how have society's expectations influenced how you live as a married couple?

Going Deeper

Marriage and family are good, but finding my ultimate purpose came through an almost ten-year struggle to become a pastor later in life. As I read these verses from Ephesians, I felt enlightened. The Apostle Paul provides insight into where a Christian finds purpose. He said, *"It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone"* Ephesians 1:11-12, MSG. How do you relate to the verses above from Ephesians 1:11-12?

In my book, in third grade, I fantasized about becoming an airline pilot. I didn't become one but finally became a pastor, the logical alternative. Becoming a pastor didn't come without some heart-pounding failures along the way. My software company failed due to a lack of capital. My first interview for pastoral candidacy failed. I didn't want my marriage to fail when I told my wife I wanted to become a pastor. Her dad left the farm to become a pastor. It sounded a little too familiar. Perhaps too close to home for her to support this new purpose-driven life I was seeking. Much of my earlier life came about based on circumstances, the right

¹ (Fredrickson et al., 2013), (Kim et al., 2013), (Hill & Turiano, 2014), (Hill et al., 2019), (Bronk et al., 2009)

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place at the right time idea. I don't grieve any of my earlier life lessons because they also led to finding a sense of purpose and direction.

Explore It

- 1) In my book's prologue, I talk about Charles Krauthammer's book *Things That Matter*. In a 1972 diving accident, Charles suffered a spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed and in a wheelchair. Despite his new difficulties, he did not stop getting his MD license. Describe any catastrophic issues that have changed the course of your life. How was your purpose for living modified, influenced, or enhanced?
- 2) What led you to your current career choice, and are you happy with it? If not, why?
- 3) Are you familiar with the term purpose-driven life? How does your life reflect your idea of being purpose-driven?
- 4) How does your purpose for living balance with your mate's purpose for living?

Applying God's Word

Finding out who we are in Christ precipitates our desire to carry out God's purpose for the world. God created humans to be an object of His love. The Bible clearly says, "*God is love,*" in 1 John 4:8. God created us to show his love to the world. "⁹*God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.* ¹⁰*In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.* ¹¹*Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.*"² Our purpose for living is closely tied to connectedness with God. God created us; we were not accidents. Our purpose is to live and breathe God's love into each other. Do we do this flawlessly like Jesus did while here on earth? NO? We are not God; we are human, but it must not stop us from living out God's purpose in the world.

Life Applications

- 1) How do you maintain purposeful living during chaos? What are your guide rails?
- 2) How does 1 John 4:8-11 help clarify God's purpose for our lives? Do you agree or disagree?
- 3) Here is the 4-H pledge from p 12. Could these be guidelines for a purpose-driven life?
I pledge my head to clearer thinking,
my heart to greater loyalty,
my hands to larger service,
and my health to better living,
for my club, my community, my country, and my world.
- 4) There is a decision-making model in the appendix, p 208. What are your thoughts about this model? How might it help provide some future guidance in making better decisions?

Wrap-up

What worked or didn't work this week?

How can we improve our discussion and sharing?

Next week Part III – Connectedness and Purpose lead to a hopeful life –

Read chapters 6 and 14

Where do you find hope today?

What does this hope look like? How do you maintain a hopeful outlook?

² [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (1 Jn 4:9–11). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.