

Live with a Purpose

1 Peter 1:13-21 (NIV)

¹³ Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." ¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Do you get up in the morning and ask yourself, "Why am I getting up today?" Do you immediately run through your to-do list in your head of the things that have to happen? Do you mentally go through the goals you are setting out to accomplish that day? Is it the exact opposite for you, that you get up in the morning and ask yourself, "Why am I doing this?" What's your answer to that question? What is the meaning a purpose of your life? How do you keep going day in and day out?

Often times we don't go past the to-do list of life. We've been taught and for the most part have accepted that we are here to accomplish things, and when they are done, we have accomplished our purpose for living. Is it even that mentality that got you out of bed this morning, got you to do through the motions of showering, getting dressed, and eating breakfast? "I have things to do. That is my purpose. Let's get them done."

I suppose that we could look at our Christian life and see nothing more than a to-do list. Get up on Sunday morning, get ready and go to church because that's what I'm supposed to do as a Christian. Pray when I go to bed because that's what I'm supposed to do as a Christian. Write out a check, set cash aside, put it in the envelope, make sure that the automatic withdrawal is set to give my offering to church because that's what a Christian is supposed to do. Be nice to people because that's what a Christian is supposed to do. Act holy and righteous, be a Mr. goodie-two-shoes because that's what a Christian is supposed to do. Is this why you do these things, because they are something Christian to do? Isn't that basically what Peter told the Christian back in the first century to do? "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do." (verses 14-15) Is this the purpose of life, to simply do things to fill up the time we have here on earth?

Don't get me wrong. There are things that we have to do every single day. They need to be done. We can't neglect them. But do we ever step back in life and wonder why am I doing these things? For some people it is enough to do things that they think will improve their life or the lives of others. They find meaning in simply having something to do, a goal to work towards and accomplish. They find meaning in having a check-list of things to do. Many people are content for this to be the meaning of life: completing a to-do list.

What about for us as Christians? Is Christianity just a different check-list than other people? Is Christianity nothing more than work to keep us busy until we do? We do we do those Christian things like going to church, helping out around church, being nice to others, praying, sharing our faith, etc.? Are these things just check-list items to complete? Does doing these things make a better life for ourselves or for other people? Do I do all these Christian things because then I can take this completed to-do list up before God and show him the evidence, the proof, that I am worthy of him, that I did live a holy life, that I deserve to be commended for all the things that I've done, for all the church services that I came to, for all the prayers I offered, for all the work that I did around the church, for all the good deeds that I did for my neighbors, for all the times that I served others instead of myself. I did it, God. Look! They're all done. It's all checked off.

I actually keep a to-do list on my desk. I print a new one every week. I even keep the old to-do lists by scanning them in. I do this to remember when I did things. It's proof for me that I did actually do things that I meant to do. But if I were to take these to-do lists and hold them up to God and say, "Look at what I did for you! Do you see all this work, how many hours of my life that I lived for you?" do you think God would be impressed? If we held up big lists of all the things we did for God, would he say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You definitely deserve the best blessings of heaven. In fact, you deserve a nicer life"?

What we do in this life does not impress God. Our completed to-do lists do not give us preferential treatment. They don't make us worthy before him. In fact, if we held up our lists to him, God would then hold out a much bigger list of all the things that we have

left undone. Our accomplishments don't impress God or make him love us or treat us better. They actually just serve as a reminder of all the things we couldn't do, failed to do. Our to-do lists condemn us instead of giving us something to boast about. If we live life just to fill out to-do lists, then we are following an empty way of life that will leave us unfulfilled in the end.

Then why listen to Peter? Why stop trying to conform to evil desires? Why be holy in all that we do? Isn't this just another to-do list? Isn't there another way to live than just filling our lives with doing things until we die?

So that his people don't fall into the idea that we should just do things to fill up a list or check off boxes on a to-do list, Peter reminds them that their lives are not defined by our earthly accomplishment. Instead, they are defined instead by what God has done for us. God redeemed you, bought you back "from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors" (verse 18)

God spared no expense when it came to redeeming us from this empty way of life, of living just to fill the hours of the day with doing stuff. He didn't value your life at the weight of gold or silver in comparison to your accomplishments. He didn't value it with things that would perish one day no matter how many refinements had taken place or how many projects had been completed. He used something even more precious to give you a purpose in life. He used the blood of his own Son, the blood of Jesus Christ, the lamb without blemish or defect, the one chosen before the creation of the world and then later revealed so that we would all know him and believe in him. He was sacrificed. His blood - blood that could not and cannot be replaced by anyone else's - is what God used to buy us back for that empty way of life of just living to do stuff.

With the precious blood of Christ, that lamb without blemish or defect, God bought for you a new life, a new birth into a living hope. You are not of this world anymore. You are not here to do what everyone else does or here just to fill the hours of every day with doing stuff. Because God bought you, you are now a foreigner here, working to be obedient to God and be holy like he is not so that you can offer up a big filled out to-do list for him. Your work is to show who you are to the world, to show the value of what God paid for you, to be holy as he has made you by the blood of the Lamb.

We as Christians pray, go to church, help out at church, give offerings, and serve others instead of ourselves because God has given us a purpose to live for. We live knowing that God has already made us worthy of being with him. He doesn't need my good works, but we do them to show the world that we belong to him, that we love him with every fiber of our being since he spared no expense to give us life now and life everlasting in heaven. He died and rose from the dead to give us purpose, hope, a future. His death and resurrection is what we hold up to God, not what we accomplished, but his work done to save us from the empty life of just doing things to do things, to pass the time with those to-do lists until we die.

With God now having given me value, this is why I want to live my life in such a way so as to not conform to evil desires that I used to. This is why I want to live a holy life, holy like my God is holy. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (verses 18-19)

Live not as a person who has to fill their lives with things to do to pass the time until we die. Live as someone who is going to live with God forever. Live as a holy person as God has made you. Live according to the value that God used to redeem you from that empty way of life. Live to show others that you have been saved by the precious blood of Christ. Amen.