

## Equipped to discover God's purposes for you (part two)

Purpose is important, not least because it gives meaning to life. It's amazing how an awareness of purpose can motivate us through good and bad situations alike. In part one we looked at five *general* purposes or plans that God has for those of us who belong to Him. These are to believe in Jesus Christ; to be Spirit-filled; to obey those in authority; to live a sexually pure life; and to be joyful, prayerful and thankful.

But what about any *specific* purposes that God might have for us as individuals? How can we set about discovering what these might be? Here are five sources of guidance that can help us tap in to God's specific purposes for our lives.

**God's word** - the primary way in which God has chosen to communicate with us is through His word, the Bible. The psalmist describes it as "*a lamp to my feet and a light for my path*".<sup>1</sup> Notice the personal element here - "*my feet*" and "*my path*". God's word guides individuals on their journeys. Just as a lamp or light illuminates what's in the immediate vicinity, God's word can shine a light on our next step. As we seek to discover God's purposes for our lives, one step at a time, it might be a good idea to get into the habit of praying with the psalmist, "*Direct my footsteps according to your word...*"<sup>2</sup>

**The Holy Spirit** - how would you like to have a trustworthy friend who always guides you in the right way? The Holy Spirit is like this because one of His tasks is to guide us into all truth.<sup>3</sup> This means He'll never deceive us or lead us in a harmful direction. Also, there are times when the Spirit prevents us from going the wrong way. In the book of Acts<sup>4</sup> we see the Holy Spirit blocking possible ministry opportunities from the apostle Paul and his companions because He had an alternative purpose in mind for these men. When we're faced with several options and it's not immediately clear which one of these best fulfills God's purpose for us, we would do well to ask the Holy Spirit to prevent us from going the wrong way as well as asking Him to guide us in the right way.

**Prayer** - there's an interesting Bible verse that says, "*...the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it*".<sup>5</sup> There can be times when we want to know what God has in mind for us but we neglect to ask Him to reveal it to us. Or perhaps we do ask Him, once or twice, and then give up if He doesn't answer as quickly as we would like. One of the psalms provides a great model prayer for discovering God's purposes: "*Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me...*"<sup>6</sup> We so much need to be taught - and that can take time.

**Wise friends** - a further source of guidance available to us is wise, trusted friends. The Old Testament book of Proverbs says, "*...with many counselors there is safety*".<sup>7</sup> We can find it difficult to cut through the fog that sometimes surrounds us but our friends might be able to offer the clarity that we so much need. When trying to discover God's purposes, it's easy for us to get tunnel vision, where we see only what we want to see. People who care about us, however, will often inject a dose of reality into our perspective and enable us to come to a wise decision regarding our options.

**Circumstances** - if we pay attention to God's word, allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit, pray about our options, and listen carefully to the views of wise friends, we might find that God intervenes in our circumstances by opening doors of opportunity for us.<sup>8</sup> Discovering His purposes for our lives doesn't mean that everything will be plain sailing - the above verse also reminds us of the reality of opposition to the work of God in and through us.

As we wonder what God's purposes might be for our individual lives, let's be confident of this - "*the Lord will fulfill His purpose for me*".<sup>9</sup> Amen!

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:133 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> John 16:13

<sup>4</sup> Acts 16:6-10

<sup>5</sup> James 4:2 (NLT)

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 25:4, 5 (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 11:14 (NLT)

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:8, 9

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 138:8 (NIV)