



Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees Called To Live With Purpose

Opening Prayer

Introduction

“Make sure you are not missing the point of your life,” says Billy Graham.

“Disoriented about your direction in Life? Are decisions tough to make and steps hard to take?” asks Max Lucado.

Both quotes are located on the back of the book cover of Rick Warren’s popular best seller, *The Purpose Driven Life*.

Warren writes in the first chapter, “The search for the purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That’s because we typically begin at the wrong starting point—ourselves. We ask self-centered questions like What do I want to be? What should I do with my life? What are my goals, my ambitions, my dreams for my future?” You may not agree with all that Warren has written in his book, but he has touched on an important point. The identity and purpose question is at the forefront of many people’s thinking today. (As witnessed by the popularity of Warren’s book.)

The identity issue and the purpose issue are important for the Christian steward. A quote, this time from Raymond M. Olson, gives us the starting point:

“In Baptism the steward is born into his stewardship. This is where and how it all begins. His Baptism will therefore be a continual point of reference. When doubts arise about the purpose of his life, this will be his reassurance. That which happens in Baptism is a reminder that we did not choose this office and relationship for ourselves. Christ has chosen us. Baptism is a gift to mankind. It is the act whereby God lays claim to us.”



A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

Most Gracious Lord,
Life is Your gift to each of us.
In Baptism You called us
into Your eternal family.

Be with us each day
as by the power of the Holy Spirit we
seek to glorify You.

Give us the courage and wisdom to
respond to Your love
and to serve You
where You have called us.

Give us the courage and strength to
bring the Good News of Salvation in
Jesus Christ
to those living without Him.

Give us the courage and generosity
to share what You entrust to us with
those in need.

We ask all these things in the Name
of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

- How is Baptism “a continual point of reference” in your life?
- Talk about the identity/purpose—stewardship link as you read the following passages:
 - Romans 6:1-4
 - Galatians 3:26-29
 - 1 Corinthians 1:4-9
 - Colossians 3:12-14

Faith Aflame:

When discussing the purpose of one’s life the Biblical concept of vocation comes into play. Vocation includes but extends beyond the Christian’s station and occupation in earthly life. Vocation includes family status (husband, wife, child), government (king, president, prince, governor, regent, judge), and every lawful occupation (farmer, soldier, merchant, and the like) that serves the well-being of the social order. Vocation is not confined to occupation, which focuses on role and status in business and financial affairs and the like. Vocation is more complex and includes every role in home, church, and the social order where men stand in relation to others. (Taken from the article “Broadening the View of Christian Vocation” in the November/December 1989 issue of *Lutheran Education* by Robert V. Schnabel)

In *God At Work*, Gene Edward Veith writes concerning vocation:

“Theologians sometimes say that the term vocation ought to be reserved for Christians. To be ‘called’ into a particular work or position is surely a function of being ‘called’ by the Gospel into a life of faith. While agreeing that God works through non-believers as well, they use other terms for their roles: *office, estate, station*. It is certainly true that a Christian, who understands his life in terms of God’s calling, will look at the work placed before him in a completely different way than will a person, doing the same work, who is lost in his sins.” (pages 34-35)

- Talk about how a Christian looks at work in a “completely different way” than an unbeliever.
- How can a proper understanding of “calling” help a person in the areas of identity and purpose? (Assist in really answering the questions “Who am I?” and “Why am I here?”)

Action Item: What specific area of my “calling” do I need to work on right now? Share that with the group. Determine now steps to take that will make a difference.

Closing Prayer

Adoration...

Confession...

Thanksgiving...

Supplication....

Praise...

Remember...

Ask...

Yield...

