

# Why Am I Here?

## Module 1 — Recognising God's Purpose for My Life



*...it is God who works in you to will and to act  
according to his good purpose*

(Philippians 2:13 - NIV)

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Cover Photo:

Road to 'Ende der Welt' ('End of the world'), Engelberg, Switzerland

Ray Graetz 2005

# **“Why Am I Here?” — Module 1 — “Recognising God’s Purpose for My Life”**

## **Version 2015-1 — Table of Contents**

### **Study Main Headings**

- 1** A life with purpose | Proof #1 — In the beginning...
- A life with purpose (continued) | Proof #2 — We have an appointed function as an appointed part of the body of Christ | Proof #3 — God has assignments prepared for us | Proof #4 — We will give account one day for how we discharged our appointed ministry
- 2**
- 3** The search to understand our purpose
- 4** Life Map #1 — “Seasons of Life” (Moses)
- 5** Life Map #1 — “Seasons of Life” (Joseph)
- 6** Life Map #1 — “Seasons of Life” (Paul)
- 7** Life Map #1 — “Seasons of Life” — My life
- 8** Life Map #2 — “Motivations” | Motivation
- 9** Life Map #2 — “Motivations” (continued) | Readiness to act | Implementation
- 10** Why our motivations are an important pointer to the specific call of God
- 11** What I have I give | Life Map #3 — “Trials”
- 12** Life Map #4 — “Natural talents and other abilities”
- 13** Life Map #5 — “Spiritual gifts”
- 14** Life Map #5 — “Spiritual gifts” (continued)
- 15** Life Map #5 — “Spiritual gifts” (continued): Principle #1 — Every believer can exercise every spiritual gift in some measure
- 16** Life Map #5 — “Spiritual gifts” (continued): Principle #2 — God assigns a ministry to every believer that will require the exercise of one, or more, primary spiritual gifts
- 17** Life Map #5 — “Spiritual gifts” (continued): Principle #3 — God imparts a greater measure of initial faith to exercise those spiritual gifts that are crucial for the outworking of our ministry
- 18** Life Map #5 — “Spiritual gifts” (continued): Principle #4 — We should seek to develop every spiritual gift | Principle #5 — We have a responsibility to help other believers develop spiritual gifts
- 19** Life Map #5 — “Spiritual gifts” (continued): A list of spiritual gifts and ministries that can be identified in the Bible
- 20** Life Map #5 — “Spiritual gifts” (continued): Measuring our current expression of spiritual gifts
- 21** Life Map #6 — “Positionings”
- 22** Bringing it all together | Common signposts to the specific call of God | Uncommon signposts to the specific call of God

**Next: Module 2 — “Outworking God’s Purpose for My Life”**





# Why Am I Here?

Recognising God's purpose for my life

Study #1



## A life with purpose

God creates us, and redeems us, for His purposes—2 Cor 5:14-15 (NIV):

*14 ...Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

And He is constantly at work in us to align our will and our actions with His purposes—Phil 2:12-13 (NIV):

*12 ...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

God has two main purposes for our life:

(1) A **general** purpose—that we grow to spiritual maturity, for example, Gal 4:19 (NIV):

*My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you*

(2) A **specific** purpose—that we recognise, and outwork, a specific ministry He has appointed for us, for example, 1 Cor 12:18 (NKJ):

*"...God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased."*

**Three main steps** are required to fulfil the specific ministry that God has appointed for us:

Step 1— Recognise that He has a specific purpose for our life.

Step 2— Recognise what His specific purpose is for our life.

Step 3— Outwork the specific purpose He has appointed for us.

Let's start with **Step 1**. Here is the first of four Bible 'proofs' that God has created us for a specific purpose...not just for a general purpose. And I'll present this in the form of 10 Bible principles of life:

## Proof #1 — In the beginning...

1. In this life, each of us is a spiritual being living in a physical, natural, perishable body—2 Cor 4:16 (TEV):

*...Even though our physical being is gradually decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day.*

Our spiritual being is our inner, invisible, non-material self—referred to in the Bible as our "heart"—and includes our conscience and our soul (mind, emotions and will). Our spiritual being is eternal, so every person who has ever been created will 'live' forever, somewhere...either with God or separated from God: *...there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.* (Acts 24:15 - NIV)

2. When our spirit is introduced into our body, we begin to live physically. While our spirit is in our body, we are alive physically. When our spirit leaves our body we die physically—James 2:26 (TEV):  
*...as the body without the spirit is dead, also faith without actions is dead.*  
 At our resurrection, our spiritual being will be clothed with an imperishable, spiritual body—  
 1 Cor 15:42-44 (ESV):  
*42 ...with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*
3. We are not solely the product of biological processes. A physical embryo is created by conception. But our spirit is NOT created by conception—our spirit can only be created by God, because we are temporal "flesh" and only God, who is eternal Spirit, can create an everlasting spirit—John 3:6 (NIV):  
*Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*  
 That's why, at physical death, our spirit returns to God who created us a spiritual being—Eccl 12:7 (ESV):  
*...the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.*
4. At some point, God introduces our spirit to a chosen human embryo to bring us into human existence as a living person—Eccl 11:5 (ESV):  
*As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.*
5. Every thing, and every person, God creates has a designated purpose, for example, in Jer 1:5 (NIV):  
*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as...*
6. When God creates something, He designs it in an optimum way to fulfil it's purpose. He does the same with people—He designs our spiritual being in an optimum way to fulfil His purpose for our life. This includes embedding in our spirit some key motivations, natural talents, and other capacities, that will be needed by us to outwork His purpose for our life.
7. Then God, who exists outside time, looks down the time-line of human history and introduces each of us into human existence at the right time, in the right place, and in the right circumstances, to fulfil His purpose for our life...because we are significant to Him before we are born physically.
8. Biological parents participate in the creation of an embryo...but God decides into which embryo He will introduce each spirit person He has created. So, while our biological parents may have decided to have a child, they had nothing to do with the crucial decision about who that child would be...when we would be born...where we would be born...or the family, local, or global, circumstances into which we would be born—all of that was decided by God...in accordance with His purpose for our life.
9. Because God created our spirit, for a purpose, and decided everything about our entry into human existence, He has been superintending every moment of our life on earth. This doesn't mean that God is the author of everything we have experienced...or endorses everything we have experienced—we live in a 'fallen' world. But He knows that, with His help, we can handle everything we experience...and He can use everything we experience to outwork His purpose for our life...if we will co-operate with Him.
10. Therefore, everything we have experienced in life is significant when it comes to recognising God's purpose for our life. This includes our life experiences before we were born again (spiritually) and life experiences we may not have chosen, or welcomed, at the time.

There are other Bible references we could study that support these principles. But, for more insight, let's examine a Bible case study that is very revealing—involving the person we know as John the Baptist.

John's purpose was prophesied to his father before he was conceived —Luke 1:11-17 (NIV):

*11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. 16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

John would be linked, in a crucial way, with Jesus. And we know that the purpose for Jesus' life was also declared before He was born...and before He was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit—Luke 1:30-38 (NIV):

*30 ...the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." 34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For nothing is impossible with God." 38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.*

Let's continue the story—Luke 1:39-44 (NIV - emphasis added):

*39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy."*

How can an unborn baby leap for joy in the womb when his mother is greeted by someone? The Holy Spirit ensured that details of this incident were included in the Bible...and this key point even repeated.

This incident has significant implications for God's specific purpose for our life. Although John was somewhat unique—in that he would be *"filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth"* (Luke 1:15)—this incident occurred before his birth, so I think we can extrapolate some general principles and apply them to people generally:

1. Six months into his development in the womb, John was aware of, and responsive to, the environment in which his mother lived, including the conversations she heard! We don't know how much he understood mentally. But he was certainly registering this event in his spirit...because his spirit was created by God for a purpose and, here, he was responding to an event that synchronised with that purpose. Further, he was registering this event in his emotions...because he *"leaped for joy"*.
2. To respond this way, John must also have been aware of the major purpose for his life! God designed him to prepare the way for Jesus. In particular, his spirit was designed to recognise *"the Lamb of God"* and reveal Him to Israel (John 1:31). This purpose was built into John's spirit from the moment he was created ...which was before he was born...and before his spirit was implanted into an embryo in Elizabeth's womb. One day, as a grown man, he would see Jesus coming toward him and say: *"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29 - NIV) And, here, in the womb, he was responding to a greeting that was given to his mother by a woman who would bear *"the Lamb of God"*!
3. John not only knew his life purpose, he must also have been aware of a link between his purpose and the purpose ordained for another person...even one who was also not yet born (although eternally existing)!

What a testimony to the fact that *"nothing is impossible with God"* (Luke 1:37).

Similarly, **our spirit has been designed for a specific purpose...as well as for a general purpose. And we must have been spiritually aware of our life purpose, to some extent, before we were born!**

Then why do some people struggle to recognise God's purpose for their life or, worse, come to doubt there even is a specific purpose ordained for them. Because life, starting from our time in the womb—especially under adverse conditions—can blur our understanding of that purpose...and even our acceptance of the fact that we have a purpose.

But let's re-examine this incident to make sure we aren't constructing conclusions on a wrong interpretation of the passage. I was talking with someone about this incident with John the Baptist in the womb and their response was to wonder if the descriptions of him leaping for joy in the womb were simply poetic language. That's a fair question. Because there are some poetic segments in the Bible. Others might wonder if this was just two first century AD, medically-uninformed women having an excited conversation. Let's accept that the baby moved in the womb—maybe even kicked—but that could have been entirely co-incidental or, perhaps, a transferred reaction to Elizabeth's excitement at hearing Mary's greeting...and something Elizabeth then innocently described as the baby's direct response to the event. How can we know what really happened?

I believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and, **within the text**, gives reliable indicators as to how it should be interpreted. First, there is nothing in the context to suggest that this section is poetic. Rather, Luke was a painstaking historian, typically documenting facts...a characteristic feature of his writing style. For example, in his introduction to his gospel, in Luke 1:1-4 (NIV), he said:

*1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*

The first time the baby's reaction is mentioned, Luke simply records it as a fact. Then—perhaps, in part, because the Holy Spirit is anticipating future speculation about this incident—the point is repeated...but this time as part of a record of what Elizabeth said...and with this crucial, explanatory lead-in (Luke 1:41-42 - NIV): *"41 ...Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed..."* Elizabeth was prophesying! She wasn't giving her own version/interpretation of events—she was declaring the Holy Spirit's knowledge of what actually happened. So, when Elizabeth said, in this prophetic declaration: *"As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy."* (verse 44), that is exactly what happened. This was a 6 month-term baby in the womb responding directly to Mary's greeting to his mother!

The implications are enormous. In particular, a new-born baby is not created to be a 'blank slate' on which life is to write some random, unguided story. Every baby has a spirit in which is embedded some understanding of God's purpose for their life.

These studies are designed to help you learn how to 'read the story' that God has written into your spirit and fulfil your God-ordained potential.



**Application** (App-WAIH-Study#1.doc)

1. What wrong beliefs might someone accept if they don't understand, or accept, these Bible principles?

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2. How do I feel about these Bible principles in relation to my life?

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# Why Am I Here?

Recognising God's purpose for my life

Study #2



## A life with purpose (continued)

In Study #1, we examined the first of four biblical 'proofs' that God has created us for a specific purpose...not just a general purpose—to fulfil a specific ministry He has appointed for us...not just to mature as a disciple of Jesus generally. Here is the second 'proof'.

### Proof #2 — We have an appointed function as an appointed part of the body of Christ

When we become a child of God we become a part of the (spiritual) body of Christ. And, as each part of a physical body has a function, so each part of the spiritual body of Christ has a function—Rom 12:4-8 (TNIV):  
*4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophecy in accordance with you faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

Crucially, it is God who decides what part of the body of Christ we are to be, because he has designed us for a specific purpose—1 Cor 12:12-20,27-28 (NIV - emphasis added):

*12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body... 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.*

The body of Christ will grow as each part does what it is appointed to do—Eph 4:15-16 (NIV):

*16 ...speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (emphasis added)*

### Proof #3 — God has assignments prepared for us

We see this demonstrated, for example, in the life of Saul/Paul—Acts 22:6-10 (NIV - emphasis added):

*6 "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' 8 "'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. "'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 9 My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me. 10 "'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. "'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'*

When Saul was intercepted by Jesus on the road to Damascus, he asked Jesus two questions that I see as the two great questions of life every person needs to ask at some point(s) in their life:

1. "Who are you, Lord?" (Saul connected with his general purpose—to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.)
2. "What shall I do, Lord?" (Saul began to understand, and engage with, his specific purpose—the specific tasks that he had been "assigned to do" as a disciple of Jesus Christ.)

We need to recognise that it's not just Bible heroes, like Paul, who have specific assignments planned for them by God—every believer has specific assignments planned for them by God.

### Proof #4 — We will give account one day for how we discharged our appointed ministry

Some of the parables Jesus told—for example, the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30)—point to our accountability to use wisely what God entrusts to us. And here is a sobering passage that links specific ministry with our accountability before God at the end of time...and rewards that we will receive (or lose) in heaven:

1 Cor 3:5-15 (TNIV - emphasis added)

*5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. 9 For we are God's co-workers; you are God's field, God's building. 10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.*

That completes a brief examination of four biblical 'proofs' that each believer has a specific ministry to fulfil. And that leads us to the next obvious question (Step 2): How can we recognise the specific ministry that God has appointed for us? We'll begin to explore that question next time.

**Application** (App-WAIH-Study#2.doc)

1. Paul, the apostle, has been used as an example, a number of times. Can we learn anything, that might be relevant to our life, by studying the life story of people in the Bible, like Paul, or did God work with people like that in a different way to us because they were special enough to be included in the Bible? Do I know any Bible passages that might address this question?

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2. What are my thoughts on these last three 'proofs' that God appoints a specific ministry for each believer?

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