

Title: "A Life of Purpose"

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Text: I Kings 3:3-8

Place: DCOG

Theme: A Life That Counts

Who among us does not want a sense of purpose and destiny?

The story is told of an unemployed person who interviewed at a zoo and was told that no openings existed. He walked away dejected. The manager later called and told the man that the zoo gorilla had died and they were in desperate need of someone to wear a gorilla costume and play the part. He agreed and swung through trees with the greatest of ease and accidentally landed in the lion pen. Scared to death, the fellow yelled for help revealing his identity. The lion shot back, "Shut up or you will get us both fired!"

All of us want purpose and a sense of contribution to the greater good. 1 Kings traces the kings in Israel for 118 years from the time of Solomon to Ahaziah. Solomon was in financial terms the Bill Gates of his day. He was skilled in academics, intelligent in practical disciplines, artistic, creative, and wealthy. His father, David, was prepared to die. Solomon was poised to become king at the age of twenty.

As the king, he had performed a partial removal of paganism from the kingdom but left some elements of it in tact. His brother, Adonijah, had attempted to seize the throne by marrying a girl in the palace. His plot was unsuccessful.

Psychologists tell us that all men have a deep longing for something to do, someone to love, and something to hope for. They are correct on every count. Let's look at Solomon's plan to live a life of purpose. The steps in these verses are...

I. LOOK CLOSELY FOR GOD'S ULTIMATE MOTIVE FOR YOUR LIFE.

1 Kings 2:1-2

When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son.

[2] "I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, show yourself a man,

- A. Solomon's father, David, gives him some pointed advice and minced no words in so doing.
 - a. In verse 2, he said to Solomon, "be strong and show yourself a man."
 - b. His advice moves far beyond the superficial goal of being masculine and physical.
 - c. He is speaking here of living a life of destiny and integrity.

- B. He continues, "and keep the charge of the Lord your God" which is a command to live God's law in daily life.
 - a. He reminds him to "live the statutes" by practicing worship and in turn exemplifying those principles in daily experience.
 - b. His ultimate motive in life is to "succeed in all that you may do and whatever you turn."

- C. The issue of success once again begs for a definition.
 - a. As we pursue our unique calling in life, we must do so along the lines of our passion, gifts, abilities and our assignment.
 - b. God looks for a willing heart and then moves us toward an assignment or calling.

II. DEVELOP A TEACHABLE SPIRIT.

1 Kings 3:3-8

Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

[4] The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. [5] At Gibeon the Lord appeared to

Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

[6] Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

[7] "Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. [8] Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number.

A. A man who stops growing stops living.

* It has been said that the only evidence of life is growth.

B. Solomon had it all but wants a life of personal growth.

- a. He had a dream while in Gibeon in which he was asked by God, "Ask what you wish me to give you."
- b. Notice the obvious desire in his heart to hear from God and to live a life of being teachable.
- c. Overwhelmed at being king, he confessed, "I am but a little child and I do not know how to come out or to go in."

Solomon also asked for ...

1 Kings 3:9

So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

C. Solomon introduces us to the second characteristic of a teachable spirit – a compassionate desire for truth.

- a. Not satisfied with relying on intellect, Solomon wanted to know God's heart. So should we.

*Arthur Neville Chamberlain (18 March 1869 – 9 November 1940) was a British Conservative politician who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from May 1937 to May 1940. Chamberlain is best known for his appeasement foreign policy, and in particular for his signing of the Munich Agreement in 1938, conceding the German-populated region of Czechoslovakia to Germany. However when Adolf Hitler continued his aggression by invading Poland, Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, and Chamberlain led Britain through the first eight months of World War II.

Chamberlain's reputation remains controversial among historians, as some blamed Chamberlain and his associates for the Munich accord and for allegedly failing to prepare the country for war.

III. INVEST YOUR INFLUENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

1 Kings 3:12

I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

- A. All of us have deposits to make in the lives of others.
 - a. Unfortunately, many of us make more withdrawals that we make deposits.
- B. Notice in these verses that Solomon did not ask for a long life, great wealth, or an ability to dominate others.
 - a. Solomon's request became "pleasing in the sight of the Lord".

1 Kings 3:10

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.

- C. Due to his humility and sense of self-sacrifice, God responded by giving him wisdom and understanding and the

added benefit of “riches and honor” and the gift of “prolonged days”.

- D. The question for us regards the longing of our hearts in serving others.
- a. Are we living by a purpose?
 - b. What do we desire to accomplish?
 - c. Who do we desire to influence?
 - d. What are we asking for?
 - e. What is the goal?

* I want to tell you that life’s meaning trumps happiness!

According to Gallup, our "happiness levels" are at a four-year high—nearly 60 percent all Americans today feel happy. But a new study cautions that there's something much more important than happiness—finding meaning or a life purpose. The study found that the two categories overlap, but there is one major difference—happiness focuses on "taking" while meaning/purpose focuses on "giving."

Happiness is about feeling good. Happy people tend to think that life is easy, they are in good physical health, and they are able to buy the things that they need and want. The *pursuit of happiness* is also associated with being a "taker." The study stated, "If anything, pure happiness is linked to not helping others in need."

In contrast, "people leading meaningful lives get a lot of joy from giving to others." Having more meaning in life was associated with activities like buying presents for others, taking care of kids, or serving others. People whose lives have high levels of meaning help others even when it comes at the expense of happiness.

So what's your most important goal in life—happiness or meaning? New studies show that having purpose and meaning in life increases overall life satisfaction. And recent research also shows that the single-minded pursuit of happiness actually makes people less happy.

Adapted from Emily Esfahani Smith, "There's More to Life than Being Happy," The Atlantic (1-9-13)