

Dear Christian friends:

If you haven't given it thought before now, you probably will very soon. Sooner, later, or most likely very often, you will find yourself asking yourself, "What is my purpose in life?" Now, there are many folks who have lots of advice about finding your personal purpose in life, but professional blogger Steve Pavlina says he can help you find your purpose in life in 20 minutes or less. Here's what to do:

1. Take out a blank sheet of paper or hop on your computer.
2. Write at the top, "What is my true purpose in life?"
3. Write an answer (any answer) that pops into your head. It doesn't have to be a complete sentence. A short phrase is fine.
4. Repeat step 3 until you write the answer that makes you cry. This is your purpose.

Now to be honest, I can't say whether this works or not. But by God's grace, I believe that I can explain to you your purpose in life in about 15 minutes *and* do it with the backing of the best life-coach around – the Holy Spirit. In fact, as on every Sunday, I'm just swiping his material anyway.

As we continue our Building Blocks of Worship Series, ♦ we look at the building block of **participation**. In order to truly live our lives as ♦ *spiritual acts of worship*, ♦ we need to understand who we *were* by nature and who we have *become* in Christ. The result of this spiritual understanding results in purposeful participation in God's plans. As we consider purposeful participation, today, please...

Few have as felt purposeless as the disciples on that first Easter Sunday. Nothing had gone well for them in the last few days. One of their friends had betrayed Jesus. They'd seen him arrested in the garden. They'd fled for their lives (to their own personal shame). They'd seen their dear Jesus, the one they'd thought was the promised Messiah, die a cruel death,

shattering their hopes and dreams. For years now they had walked by his side, listened to him teach, and shared all. But now, in spite of the reports that Jesus had been seen alive, or at least his grave had been empty, there was so much uncertainty. Nothing was as it had been.

And so, *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

Did you catch it? Steve Pavlina said it would take 20 minutes. I said 15. Jesus did it in one sentence! ♦ *As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.* With such simple words, Jesus clearly defines our purpose, and in so doing he gives us the opportunity to participate in the future plan of his Church. Sharing the message of salvation is part of the essence of a Christian. It's part of our job description. It's a part of truly living purposeful lives as *spiritual acts of worship*.

I know, the thought of telling others about your faith can be scary, can't it? It's so much easier for us not to worry about how the world would respond to our attempts to tell them of Jesus. It's much easier for us to lock ourselves up in a room and do nothing. In fact, how often don't we find ourselves keeping our faith just a little bit under the surface—lest anyone classify us as one of those weird religious types. We're afraid. We're afraid of persecution. We're afraid of offending. Let's be honest, we are afraid of our sins against our Lord being thrown back at us by him or others.

But to you and me, the resurrected Jesus shows you the wounds in his hands and side and he says, *Peace be with you!* Look at those wounds: The nail holes in his hands and in his feet, the hole in his side where he was pierced, these wounds, these holes show you that your sins have been paid for. These wounds show you that all your enemies have been conquered. These marks prove that you have nothing to fear because not only has

your Savior defeated your foes, but he's risen to give you eternal life.

And it's through his death and resurrection that you now stand not as a dead enemy of God, but as his living child. The sin that used to separate you from God has been removed. Your enmity has been replaced with true peace. ♦ This is who you were: a scared sinner. ♦ This is who you have become: a saved saint. This is what your risen Savior offers you: Peace with God now and forever.

But for what purpose? *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."* In other words, Jesus is saying, you must testify. You have the comfort of true peace. You have the message that all people need to hear. You have the words of eternal life. Let the knowledge and belief of those words move you to share them with others. And it begins right here.

If you are physically able, I invite you stand up. Now take a slow turn and look around the room. Do you realize how encouraging it is to them that you are here? Do you understand the importance of joining with family, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ as together you approach the Lord's throne of grace for forgiveness, as together you seek his help and presence in the lives of his people, ♦ as together you *declare the praises of him you called you out of darkness into his wonderful light*? Yes, Jesus has sent you to ♦ purposely participate and it begins right here ♦ in this Sanctuary, a place set apart for God's people to safely be who you have become in Christ.

In here, of course, maybe it's a little easier to know your purpose than out there. Sometimes we get confused in our words and actions out there, causing us to feel confused about our purpose in here. There's a saying that says it all: ♦ "*Why are you trying so hard to fit in when you were born to stand out?*" Your purpose, your motivation to worship may be clear in here, but what about out there?

I once read about a man who claimed to be able to see when someone was about to die. He would see a purple haze around the heads of the people who would die that day.

Helpless to stop their deaths, he would walk through crowded rooms, spotting purple hazes here and there, and would stare at the unknowing faces of the doomed, aghast at his knowledge.

That, of course, was a fairy tale, but it illustrates a tragic point. *We* know the condition of sinful man, and *we* know the penalty for sin is eternal death. ♦ Just like the man in that fairy tale, *we* can see those who are doomed to die. Their heads ringed by the purple haze of unbelief, knowingly or unknowingly they make their way down the path of life, until time runs out and divine justice hands down the verdict of guilty, and the penalty of eternal death.

These are not nameless, faceless people for whom this retribution awaits. My friends, we can see who they are! We can see them across the fence of our yard, across the desk at work, maybe even across the table at dinner. Just think for a moment of all the faces you know that are shrouded by the purple haze of unbelief. What tragic knowledge we have!

But, my friends, unlike the man in that fairy tale, we are not helpless. God has given us the ♦ privilege of purposeful participation that we might share in this ministry of preaching the good news to the lost so that they, too, may know the comfort of forgiveness and the purpose of life in Christ. Let your light shine as you chat over the back fence. Let your light shine as you share godly advice with that struggling co-worker. Let your light shine in your home as you quietly and confidently live your faith in purposeful participation ♦ ...out there!

If you're looking for alternate approach to finding out your life purpose, you are welcome to try. Even Mr. Twenty Minutes, Steve Pavlina, qualifies that you may have to spend more than hour until the tears are finally gushing. Even then he admits that the end result is that you stop following his blog. But not us. Jesus has been clear, *As the Father has sent me, I am sending you...that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* ♦ God grant you the joy of participating in a life of worship for his purposes in here AND out there. Amen.