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The Purpose Driven Life

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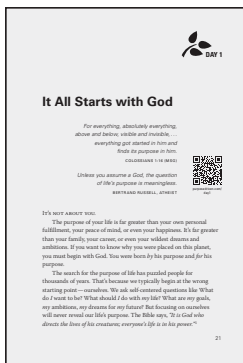
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includes all the wisdom of the original book, plus new insights Warren has gleaned since he first wrote *The Purpose Driven Life*. What on earth are you here for? Read, see, and hear the answers from Rick Warren himself.

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WHAT ON EARTH AM I HERE FOR?



*A life devoted to things is a dead life, a stump;
a God-shaped life is a flourishing tree.*

PROVERBS 11:28 (MSG)

*Blessed are those who trust in the Lord. . . . They
are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots
that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not
bothered by the heat or worried by long months of
drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right
on producing delicious fruit.*

JEREMIAH 17:7 – 8 (NLT)

It All Starts with God

*For everything, absolutely everything,
above and below, visible and invisible, . . .
everything got started in him and
finds its purpose in him.*

COLOSSIANS 1:16 (MSG)

*Unless you assume a God, the question
of life's purpose is meaningless.*

BERTRAND RUSSELL, ATHEIST



[purposedriven.com/
day1](http://purposedriven.com/day1)

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU.

The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.

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? But focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose. The Bible says, "*It is God who directs the lives of his creatures; everyone's life is in his power.*"¹

Contrary to what many popular books, movies, and seminars tell you, you won't discover your life's meaning by looking within yourself. You have probably tried that already. You didn't create yourself, so there is no way you can tell yourself what you were created for! If I handed you an invention you had never seen before, you wouldn't

Focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose.

know its purpose, and the invention itself wouldn't be able to tell you either. Only the creator or the owner's manual could reveal its purpose.

I once got lost in the mountains. When I stopped to ask for directions to the campsite, I was told, "*You can't get there from here. You must start from the other side of the mountain!*" In the same way, you cannot arrive at your life's purpose by starting with a focus on yourself. You must begin with God, your Creator. You exist only because God wills that you exist. You were made *by* God and *for* God — and until you understand that, life will never make sense. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads to a dead end.

Many people try to use God for their own self-actualization, but that is a reversal of nature and is doomed to failure. You were made for God, not vice versa, and life is about letting God use you for *his* purposes, not your using him for your own purpose. The Bible says, "*Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life.*"²

I have read many books that suggest ways to discover the purpose of my life. All of them could be classified as "self-help" books because they approach the subject from a self-centered viewpoint. Self-help books, even Christian ones, usually offer the same predictable steps to finding your life's purpose: Consider your dreams. Clarify your values. Set some goals. Figure out what you are good at. Aim high. Go for it! Be disciplined. Believe you can achieve your goals. Involve others. Never give up.

Of course, these recommendations often lead to great success. You can usually succeed in reaching a goal if you put your mind to it. But being successful and fulfilling your life's purpose are *not at all* the same issue! You could reach all your personal goals, becoming a raving success by the world's standard, and *still* miss the purposes for which God created you. You need more than self-help advice. The Bible says, "*Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.*"³

This is not a self-help book. It is not about finding the right career, achieving your dreams, or planning your life. It is not about how to cram more activities into an overloaded schedule. Actually, it will teach you how to do *less* in life — by focusing on what matters most. It is about becoming what *God* created you to be.

How, then, do you discover the purpose you were created for? You have only two options. Your first option is *speculation*. This is what most people choose. They conjecture, they guess, they theorize. When people say, "I've always thought life is . . .," they mean, "This is the best guess I can come up with."

For thousands of years, brilliant philosophers have discussed and speculated about the meaning of life. Philosophy is an important subject and has its uses, but when it comes to determining the purpose of life, even the wisest philosophers are just guessing.

Dr. Hugh Moorhead, a philosophy professor at Northeastern Illinois University, once wrote to 250 of the best-known philosophers, scientists, writers, and intellectuals in the world, asking them, "What is the meaning of life?" He then published

their responses in a book. Some offered their best guesses, some admitted that they just made up a purpose for life, and others were honest enough to say they were clueless. In fact, a number of famous intellectuals asked Professor Moorhead to write back and tell them if he discovered the purpose of life!⁴

You were made by God and for God — and until you understand that, life will never make sense.

Fortunately, there is an alternative to speculation about the meaning and purpose of life. It's *revelation*. We can turn to what God has revealed about life in his Word. The easiest way to discover the purpose of an invention is to ask the creator of it. The same is true for discovering your life's purpose: Ask God.

God has not left us in the dark to wonder and guess. He has clearly revealed his five purposes for our lives through the Bible. It is our Owner's Manual, explaining why we are alive, how life works, what to avoid, and what to expect in the future. It explains what no self-help or philosophy book could know. The Bible says, "*God's wisdom ... goes deep into the interior of his purposes.... It's not the latest message, but more like the oldest — what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us.*"⁵

DAY 1: God is not just the starting point of your life; he is the
It All Starts source of it. To discover your purpose in life you must turn
with God to God's Word, not the world's wisdom. You must build
 your life on eternal truths, not pop psychology, success-
 motivation, or inspirational stories. The Bible says, "*It's in Christ that
we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first
heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs
on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in
everything and everyone.*"⁶ This verse gives us three insights into your
purpose.

1. You discover your identity and purpose through a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you don't have such a relationship, I will later explain how to begin one.
2. God was thinking of you long before you ever thought about him. His purpose for your life predates your conception. He planned it before you existed, *without your input!* You may choose your career, your spouse, your hobbies, and many other parts of your life, but you don't get to choose your purpose.

3. The purpose of your life fits into a much larger, cosmic purpose that God has designed for eternity. That's what this book is about.

Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, grew up under an atheistic Communist regime. But God got his attention one dreary day. He recalls, "In my twenty-seventh year, while riding the metro in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) I was overcome with a despair so great that life seemed to stop at once, preempting the future entirely, let alone any meaning. Suddenly, all by itself, a phrase appeared: *Without God life makes no sense*. Repeating it in astonishment, I rode the phrase up like a moving staircase, got out of the metro and walked into God's light."⁷

You may have felt in the dark about *your* purpose in life. Congratulations, you're about to walk into the light.

DAY 1

Thinking about My Purpose

POINT TO PONDER: It's not about me.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: *"Everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him."* COLOSSIANS 1:16B (MSG)

QUESTION TO CONSIDER: In spite of all the advertising around me, how can I remind myself that life is really about living for God, not myself?

MESSAGE TO HEAR: www.purposedriven.com/day1





You Are Not an Accident

*I am your Creator.
You were in my care
even before you were born.*

ISAIAH 44:2A (CEV)



[purposedriven.com/
day2](http://purposedriven.com/day2)

God does not play dice.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

YOU ARE NOT AN ACCIDENT.

Your birth was no mistake or mishap, and your life is no fluke of nature. Your parents may not have planned you, but God did. He was not at all surprised by your birth. In fact, he expected it.

Long before you were conceived by your parents, you were conceived in the mind of God. He thought of you first. It is not fate, nor chance, nor luck, nor coincidence that you are breathing at this very moment. You are alive because God wanted to create you! The Bible says, *“The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me.”*¹

God prescribed every single detail of your body. He deliberately chose your race, the color of your skin, your hair, and every other feature. He custom-made your body just the way he wanted it. He also determined the natural talents you would possess and the uniqueness of your personality. The Bible says, *“You know me inside and out, you*

know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something.”²

Because God made you for a reason, he also decided *when* you would be born and *how long* you would live. He planned the days of your life in advance, choosing the exact time of your birth and death. The Bible says, “*You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book!*”³

God also planned *where* you’d be born and where you’d live for his purpose. Your race and nationality are no accident. God left no detail to chance. He planned it all for *his* purpose. The Bible says, “*From one man he made every nation, . . . and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.*”⁴ Nothing in your life is arbitrary. It’s all for a purpose.

Most amazing, God decided *how* you would be born. Regardless of the circumstances of your birth or who your parents are, God had a plan in creating you. It doesn’t matter whether your parents were good, bad, or indifferent. God knew that those two individuals possessed *exactly* the right genetic makeup to create the custom “you” he had in mind. They had the DNA God wanted to make you.

While there are illegitimate parents, there are no illegitimate children. Many children are unplanned by their parents, but they are not unplanned by God. God’s purpose took into account human error, and even sin.

God never does anything accidentally, and he never makes mistakes. He has a reason for everything he creates. Every plant and every animal was planned by God, and every person was designed with a purpose in mind. God’s motive for creating you was his love. The Bible says, “*Long before he laid down earth’s foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love.*”⁵

God was thinking of you even *before* he made the world. In fact,

Long before you were conceived by your parents, you were conceived in the mind of God.

that’s why he created it! God designed this planet’s environment just so we could live in it. We are the focus of his love and the most valuable of all his creation. The Bible says, “*God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all the things he made.*”⁶ This is how much God loves and values you!

God is not haphazard; he planned it all with great precision. The more physicists, biologists, and other scientists learn about the universe, the better we understand how it is uniquely suited for our existence, custom-made with the *exact* specifications that make human life possible.

Dr. Michael Denton, senior research fellow in human molecular genetics at the University of Otago in New Zealand, has concluded, “All the evidence available in the biological sciences supports the core proposition . . . that the cosmos is a specially designed whole with life and mankind as its fundamental goal and purpose, a whole in which all facets of reality have their meaning and explanation in this central fact.”⁷ The Bible said the same thing thousands of years earlier: “*God formed the earth. . . . He did not create it to be empty but formed it to be inhabited.*”⁸

Why did God do all this? Why did he bother to go to all the trouble of creating a universe for us? Because he is a God of love. This kind of love is difficult to fathom, but it’s fundamentally reliable. You were created as a special object of God’s love! God made you so he could love you. This is a truth to build your life on.

DAY 2: The Bible tells us, “*God is love.*”⁹ It doesn’t say
You Are Not God *has* love. He *is* love! Love is the essence of God’s
an Accident character. There is perfect love in the fellowship of the
 Trinity, so God didn’t *need* to create you. He wasn’t
 lonely. But he wanted to make you in order to express his love. God
 says, “*I have carried you since you were born; I have taken care of you
 from your birth. Even when you are old, I will be the same. Even when
 your hair has turned gray, I will take care of you. I made you and will
 take care of you.*”¹⁰

If there was no God, we would all be “accidents,” the result of astronomical random chance in the universe. You could stop reading this book, because life would have no purpose or meaning or significance. There would be no right or wrong, and no hope beyond your brief years here on earth.

But there *is* a God who made you for a reason, and your life has profound meaning! We discover that meaning and purpose *only* when we make God the reference point of our lives. The Message paraphrase of Romans 12:3 says, “*The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us.*”

This poem by Russell Kelfer sums it up:

You are who you are for a reason.
 You're part of an intricate plan.
 You're a precious and perfect unique design,
 Called God's special woman or man.

You look like you look for a reason.
 Our God made no mistake.
 He knit you together within the womb,
 You're *just* what he wanted to make.

The parents you had were the ones he chose,
 And no matter how you may feel,
 They were custom-designed with God's plan in mind,
 And they bear the Master's seal.

No, that trauma you faced was not easy.
 And God wept that it hurt you so;
 But it was allowed to shape your heart
 So that into his likeness you'd grow.

You are who you are for a reason,
 You've been formed by the Master's rod.
 You are who you are, beloved,
 Because there is a God!¹¹



DAY 2

Thinking about My Purpose

POINT TO PONDER: I am not an accident.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: *“I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born.”* ISAIAH 44:2 (CEV)

QUESTION TO CONSIDER: I know that God uniquely created me. What areas of my personality, background, and physical appearance am I struggling to accept?

MESSAGE TO HEAR: www.purposedriven.com/day2



What Drives Your Life?

*I observed that the basic motive for success
is the driving force of envy and jealousy!*

ECCLESIASTES 4:4 (LB)

*The man without a purpose
is like a ship without a rudder—
a waif, a nothing, a no man.*

THOMAS CARLYLE



[purposedriven.com/
day3](http://purposedriven.com/day3)

EVERYONE'S LIFE IS DRIVEN BY SOMETHING.

Most dictionaries define the verb *drive* as “to guide, to control, or to direct.” Whether you are driving a car, a nail, or a golf ball, you are guiding, controlling, and directing it at that moment. What is the driving force in your life?

Right now you may be driven by a problem, a pressure, or a deadline. You may be driven by a painful memory, a haunting fear, or an unconscious belief. There are hundreds of circumstances, values, and emotions that can drive your life. Here are five of the most common ones:

Many people are driven by guilt. They spend their entire lives running from regrets and hiding their shame. Guilt-driven people are manipulated by memories. They allow their past to control their future. They often unconsciously punish themselves by sabotaging

their own success. When Cain sinned, his guilt disconnected him from God's presence, and God said, "*You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.*"¹ That describes most people today — wandering through life without a purpose.

We are products of our past, but we don't have to be prisoners of it. God's purpose is not limited by your past. He turned a murderer named Moses into a leader and a coward named Gideon into a courageous hero, and he can do amazing things with the rest of your life, too. God specializes in giving people a fresh start. The Bible says, "*What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven!...What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.*"²

Many people are driven by resentment and anger. They hold on to hurts and never get over them. Instead of releasing their pain through forgiveness, they rehearse it over and over in their minds. Some resentment-driven people "*clam up*" and internalize their anger, while others "*blow up*" and explode it onto others. Both responses are unhealthy and unhelpful.

Resentment always hurts you more than it does the person you resent. While your offender has probably forgotten the offense and gone on with life, you continue to stew in your pain, perpetuating the past.

Listen: Those who have hurt you in the past cannot continue to hurt you now *unless* you hold on to the pain through resentment. Your past is past! Nothing will change it. You are only hurting yourself with your bitterness. For your own sake, learn from it, and then let it go. The Bible says, "*To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do.*"³

Many people are driven by fear. Their fears may be a result of a traumatic experience, unrealistic expectations, growing up in a high-control home, or even genetic predisposition. Regardless of the cause, fear-driven people often miss great opportunities because they're afraid to venture out. Instead they play it safe, avoiding risks and trying to maintain the status quo.

Fear is a self-imposed prison that will keep you from becoming what God intends for you to be. You *must* move against it with the weapons of faith and love. The Bible says, “*Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life — fear of death, fear of judgment — is one not yet fully formed in love.*”⁴

Many people are driven by materialism. Their desire to acquire becomes the whole goal of their lives. This drive to always want more is based on the misconceptions that having more will make me more happy, more important, and more secure, but all three ideas are untrue. Possessions only provide *temporary* happiness. Because things do not change, we eventually become bored with them and then want newer, bigger, better versions.

It’s also a myth that if I get more, I will be more important. Self-worth and net worth are not the same. Your value is not determined by your valuables, and God says the most valuable *things* in life are not things!

Nothing matters more than knowing God’s purposes for your life, and nothing can compensate for not knowing them.

The most common myth about money is that having more will make me more secure. It won’t. Wealth can be lost instantly through a variety of uncontrollable factors. Real security can only be found in that which can never be taken from you — your relationship with God.

Many people are driven by the need for approval. They allow the expectations of parents or spouses or children or teachers or friends to control their lives. Many adults are still trying to earn the approval of unpleasable parents. Others are driven by peer pressure, always worried by what others might think. Unfortunately, those who follow the crowd usually get lost in it.

I don’t know all the keys to success, but one key to failure is to try to please everyone. Being controlled by the opinions of others is a guaranteed way to miss God’s purposes for your life. Jesus said, “*No one can serve two masters.*”⁵

There are other forces that can drive your life but all lead to the same dead end: unused potential, unnecessary stress, and an unfulfilled life.

This 40-day journey will show you how to live a *purpose-driven* life — a life guided, controlled, and directed by God’s purposes. Nothing matters more than knowing God’s purposes for your life, and nothing can compensate for not knowing them — not success, wealth, fame, or pleasure. Without a purpose, life is motion without meaning, activity without direction, and events without reason. Without a purpose, life is trivial, petty, and pointless.

The Benefits of Purpose-Driven Living

There are five great benefits of living a purpose-driven life:

Knowing your purpose gives meaning to your life. We were made to have meaning. This is why people try dubious methods, like astrology or psychics, to discover it. When life has meaning, you can bear almost anything; without it, nothing is bearable.

A young man in his twenties wrote, “I feel like a failure because I’m struggling to become something, and I don’t even know what it is. All I know how to do is to get by. Someday, if I discover my purpose, I’ll feel I’m beginning to live.”

Without God, life has no purpose, and without purpose, life has no meaning. Without meaning, life has no significance

DAY 3: *What Drives Your Life?* or hope. In the Bible, many different people expressed this hopelessness. Isaiah complained, “*I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing.*”⁶ Job said, “*My life drags by — day after hopeless day*”⁷ and “*I give up; I am tired of living. Leave me alone. My life makes no sense.*”⁸ The greatest tragedy is not death, but life without purpose.

Hope is as essential to your life as air and water. You need hope to cope. Dr. Bernie Siegel found he could predict which of his cancer patients would go into remission by asking, “Do you want to live to be

one hundred?” Those with a deep sense of life purpose answered yes and were the ones most likely to survive. Hope comes from having a purpose.

If you have felt hopeless, hold on! Wonderful changes are going to happen in your life as you begin to live it on purpose. God says, *“I know what I am planning for you. . . . ‘I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future.’”*⁹ You may feel you are facing an impossible situation, but the Bible says, *“God . . . is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of — infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes.”*¹⁰

Knowing your purpose simplifies your life. It defines what you do and what you don’t do. Your purpose becomes the standard you use to evaluate which activities are essential and which aren’t. You simply ask, “Does this activity help me fulfill one of God’s purposes for my life?”

Without a clear purpose you have no foundation on which you base decisions, allocate your time, and use your resources. You will tend to make choices based on circumstances, pressures, and your mood at that moment. People who don’t know their purpose try to do too much — and *that* causes stress, fatigue, and conflict.

It is impossible to do everything people want you to do. You have just enough time to do God’s will. If you can’t get it all done, it means you’re trying to do more than God intended for you to do (or, possibly, that you’re watching too much television). Purpose-driven living leads to a simpler lifestyle and a saner schedule. The Bible says, *“A pretentious, showy life is an empty life; a plain and simple life is a full life.”*¹¹ It also leads to peace of mind: *“You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.”*¹²

Knowing your purpose focuses your life. It concentrates your effort and energy on what’s important. You become effective by being selective.

It’s human nature to get distracted by minor issues. We play *Trivial Pursuit* with our lives. Henry David Thoreau observed that

people live lives of “*quiet desperation*,” but today a better description is *aimless distraction*. Many people are like gyroscopes, spinning around at a frantic pace but never going anywhere.

Without a clear purpose, you will keep changing directions, jobs, relationships, churches, or other externals — hoping each change will settle the confusion or fill the emptiness in your heart. You think, *Maybe this time it will be different*, but it doesn’t solve your real problem — a lack of focus and purpose.

The Bible says, “*Don’t live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants.*”¹³

The power of focusing can be seen in light. Diffused light has little power or impact, but you can concentrate its energy by focusing it. With a magnifying glass, the rays of the sun can be focused to set grass or paper on fire. When light is focused even more as a laser beam, it can cut through steel.

There is nothing quite as potent as a focused life, one lived on purpose. The men and women who have made the greatest difference in history were the most focused. For instance, the apostle Paul almost single-handedly spread Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. His secret was a focused life. He said, “*I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.*”¹⁴

If you want your life to have impact, *focus* it! Stop dabbling. Stop trying to do it all. Do less. Prune away even good activities and do only that which matters most. Never confuse activity with productivity. You can be busy without a purpose, but what’s the point? Paul said, “*Let’s keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us.*”¹⁵

Knowing your purpose motivates your life. Purpose always produces passion. Nothing energizes like a clear purpose. On the other hand, passion dissipates when you lack a purpose. Just getting out of bed becomes a major chore. It is usually meaningless work, not overwork, that wears us down, saps our strength, and robs our joy.

George Bernard Shaw wrote, “This is the true joy of life: the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clot of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”

Knowing your purpose prepares you for eternity. Many people spend their lives trying to create a lasting legacy on earth. They want to be remembered when they’re gone. Yet, what ultimately matters most will not be what others say about your life but what *God* says. What people fail to realize is that all achievements are eventually surpassed, records are broken, reputations fade, and tributes are forgotten. In college, James Dobson’s goal was to become the school’s tennis champion. He felt proud when his trophy was prominently placed in the school’s trophy cabinet. Years later, someone mailed him that trophy. They had found it in a trashcan when the school was remodeled. Jim said, “*Given enough time, all your trophies will be trashed by someone else!*”

Living to create an earthly legacy is a shortsighted goal. A wiser use of time is to build an *eternal* legacy. You weren’t put on earth to be remembered. You were put here to prepare for eternity.

One day you will stand before God, and he will do an audit of your life, a final exam, before you enter eternity. The Bible says, “*Remember, each of us will stand personally before the judgment seat of God.... Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God.*”¹⁶ Fortunately, God wants us to pass this test, so he has given us the questions in advance. From the Bible we can surmise that God will ask us two crucial questions:

First, “*What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ?*” God won’t ask about your religious background or doctrinal views. The only thing that will matter is, did you accept what Jesus did for you and did you learn to love and trust him? Jesus said, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*”¹⁷

Second, “*What did you do with what I gave you?*” What did

you do with your life — all the gifts, talents, opportunities, energy, relationships, and resources God gave you? Did you spend them on yourself, or did you use them for the purposes God made you for?”

Preparing you for these two questions is the goal of this book. The first question will determine *where* you spend eternity. The second question will determine *what you do* in eternity. By the end of this book you will be ready to answer both questions.



DAY 3

Thinking about My Purpose

POINT TO PONDER: Living on purpose is the path to peace.

VERSE TO REMEMBER: *“You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.”*

ISAIAH 26:3 (TEV)

QUESTION TO CONSIDER: What would my family and friends say is the driving force of my life? What do I want it to be?

MESSAGE TO HEAR: www.purposedriven.com/day3

