

## Fulfilling God's Purpose - Imitating Jesus' (Part One)

We are all called to imitate the character of Jesus Christ. The fundamental test of discipleship is not statements of objectives or declarations of noble purpose (as genuine as these may be doctrinally); it is likeness to the Master. Following whom? Disciple of whom? How much is evident? When people see us, do they see Christ? Someone once said that the mark of a true Christian is that, if the neighbours accused him or her of being a follower of Jesus, would there would be enough evidence to sustain a conviction? Someone else said that the mark of a true Christian is that he or she is prepared to give their parrot to the town gossip. Christians are called to fulfill God's purpose by imitating Jesus. If this occurs, everything else will fall into place.

### *Jesus had a mission statement*

Jesus had a defined strategy for his life. He knew the nature of his calling and strove to fulfill only that (John 9:5). He had a *passion* for the things of God, a desire to see God glorified in everything he did; he was *guided* by the Holy Spirit each step of the way; there was a sense of *urgency* in what he did, where he went, how he used his time; he was *hungry* for *intimacy* with God; his ministry had a clear *focus* and he was *faithful* to God's purpose. Because of all this, he was able, in a narrow window of only three years to carry out everything that God wanted. Nothing was left undone. No-Every goal orand strategy was not completely met. Jesus' life was a total success, in terms of what touched the world and counted for eternity. What motivated Him was what motivated his heavenly father. That is what should motivate us. Jesus came with a mission; that (in turn) becomes our mission. He acted with holy zeal and passion. If we imitate him, we will know and carry out God's heart for our lives.

Jesus' Mission Statement is outlined in Luke 4:14-21. He knew what His life and call were all about. He interpreted everything he heard, saw and did according to this criterion. Jesus' drivers were God and people. "The Son of man is come to seek and save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). Nothing else really mattered, nothing else counted. Only what came from the Father was valid.

Too often we are vague about God's will for our lives and what we are seeking to do as Christians. We find it hard to articulate what "serving God" actually means. We get caught up doing things that are extraneous to what God wants and waste much of our lives pursuing peripheral objectives. Now is the time to re-evaluate what we are seeking to accomplish and to align our purposes more closely with His.

### *Grasping Jesus' purpose*

Look at Jesus. His purpose in relation to God was to be a worshipper. When Satan offered him all the kingdoms of the world, he said his only mandate was to worship God. That was the most important thing in his life. "Zeal for your house has consumed me." He wasn't interested in great cathedrals, liturgy or rituals,

but the honour and glory of God. When the disciples marveled at the grandeur of the temple in Jerusalem, “Look at the building!”, he said that it would have to be torn down. God was building a new temple, based on living stones, a house made up of people. That was His conviction. When we are tempted to chase the world’s kingdoms, authority and splendor, God wants us to be worshippers. We are “partakers of His nature” and as we follow Jesus we come to realise that the physical world is only temporary. His priorities are fundamentally different to those society seeks to inculcate in us.

Jesus’ purpose in relation to people around him was to make them whole. Wherever he went, he saw needs. He loved people and his heart went out to them in their hour of difficulty and grief, but he didn’t just focus on needs as ends in themselves. He used needs as opportunities to draw men and women to the Kingdom of God, then helped them to grow and equipped them to go and do the same in the world. Jesus was stirred and energized by God’s plan of redemption for people. His neighbours ridiculed him, his family questioned his sanity, one of his best friends betrayed him to death, the religious leaders rejected his message, but the heart of Jesus was geared to touching people, setting them free, opening their eyes, preaching hope to the dispossessed, lonely and forsaken. As disciples, that is also our mission.

Jesus’ purpose in relation to the world at large was to be a missionary. “Don’t say the harvest will be ready in four months. Now is the time of harvest”. There were always “other sheep”, men and women who were lost and a long way from God, who needed to be brought back into God’s fold. To Jesus, every unsaved person was a “lost sheep”, and this created an urgency in his life and ministry. When he rose again, the disciples thought he would restore the lost Kingdom to Israel. They still hadn’t grasped the message; the truth hadn’t sunk in. Instead of political suzerainty, he promised spiritual power so that they could go into the world and proclaim His message. The same Holy Spirit who energised Jesus would be in us, to enable us to continue what he started. Discipleship involved partnership with the Holy Spirit, to see walls of indifference, religion and materialism broken down, souls saved and churches planted. That has become our mission.

All the performance indicators showed that Jesus fulfilled the mission for which God sent him. His life glorified God. He kept those who were given to him: The world believed through them. If you obey God’s will for your life, the result will be the same. It may take many different shapes, but the bottom line will be identical.

### *Fulfilling the mission with passion*

One of the characteristics that made Jesus different was his passion for the purpose of God. Someone has said that the first rule of success in any enterprise is that we be interested in it. Jesus set the highest possible standard for personal commitment to God’s plan.

Passion in what we do can make an enormous difference. Consider the Spanish composer Joaquin Rodrigo, the writer of the majestic *Concierto de Aranjuez*.

Joaquín Rodrigo was born in Sagunto (Valencia) in 1901. At the age of three he lost his sight almost completely as a result of an attack of diphtheria. Undaunted, he taught himself Braille. At the age of eight he began musical studies and went on to master a number of instruments and become a recognised composer. His work covers a wide range of instrumental, vocal and choral compositions, including eleven concertos (guitar, piano, violin, harp, and cello), songs, ballet music, sacred music and film scores. He was honoured by governments, universities and musical organisations around the world. When I watched a recording of his last interview, the thing that struck me about Rodrigo was not his blindness or other serious infirmities. These were lost from sight as I was caught up in the passion with which he spoke. God, I prayed, help us all to have such a passion for Jesus.

As disciples, we need to learn how to let go of negativity about our circumstances and allow a holy passion to fuel our calling. English revivalist Wesley is said to have encouraged preachers to get “on fire for God”; if they did, people would come to watch them burn (metaphorically). I have stood on the site in Seville, Spain where evangelical Christians were literally burned for their faith during the Spanish Inquisition. *Get on fire for God.*

The world knows the importance of passion. Body Shop founder, Anita Roddick, says, “Passion persuades”. We are often too conservative. Colossians 3:23 tells us that, whatever we do; we should work at it with all our hearts, as working for the Lord. We are called to “live to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:15; Galatians 2:19). If you truly love Jesus, let that love, mixed with obedience to God, be a foundation for your life. Be determined to make *difference*, to be a person of influence. Jesus in you can be instrumental in changing peoples’ lives. Make passion for serving Him your theme. Paul encourages us, “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11).

Every hero of the Bible seized the moment and used what God put in his or her hand. You can do the same. Moses was given a *stick* and he used it to confound Pharaoh’s magicians and open up the Red Sea. The disciples were given a few small loaves of bread and fish and fed thousands of people. A woman in the Old Testament offered a prophet a few empty jugs and they were miraculously filled with oil. A poor woman offered God two small coins and her gift has served as an example to millions of believers. Peter was given a net and used the lessons it taught to go fishing for men & women. Maybe you have an idea. Let the Holy Spirit breathe fire on it and use you.

Sometimes we feel tired; we sense that we have run dry. The spark just doesn’t seem to be there. David confessed, “My zeal wears me out” (Psalm 119:139). That is the time to “wait on the Lord”, so that we can be refreshed spiritually, emotionally and physically. The exhortation of 1 Corinthians 15:58 remains appropriate: “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain”. God grant each of us a fresh touch of His Holy Fire and the stamina to do His will.

*Get excited for God*

Every great accomplishment is the result of a burning heart. If you want to be an effective Christian, you need to allow the Holy Spirit to burn in you (unlike the Laodicean church in Revelation chapter three; it was so lukewarm that it was of no good to anyone). Be inspired and inspire others. “Your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action” was a remark by Paul to a group in Christians in first century Corinth (2 Corinthians 9:2). Live as though you truly believe that [you](#) work for him, that all you do, is worthwhile, that it has eternal value. That will overcome self-doubt, guilt, impotence, failure and the smallness many of us feel.

Allow God to birth a passion in your heart, for His plan and your part in it. Get excited! Don't let indifference and lack of focus or the problems of “moment” distract, rob, cheat, depress or derail you. Be an imitator of Jesus. I can't imagine Jesus moaning, “Here we go again”, during his earthly ministry. Sure, he got tired and disappointed. But even when he was fatigued, his attitude was, “We have to go on”. A job had to be done and the need was both urgent and important.

Whatever you have; surrender it and make your life count. Don't settle for boring indifference, mediocrity, soulless materialism, chasing after straw. Don't be an imitator of people you see on television or in public life. What you see is not the real picture (many were socked when comedian Jim Carey recently admitted he constantly suffers from depression and despair). Imitate Jesus, in your home life, your personal ethics, on the job, in your relationships and in your secret thought life. Get a Vision for Life. When God & faith & obedience come together in same place anything can happen.

Get a burning passion for the things of God. Be fanatical! Be a maniac. It's OK. Because God is building a Kingdom that will last forever and your work for him is not in vain. Your life is not meant to be common, dull or predictable. As a Christian, a disciple of Jesus, you have a calling from God! Live for Him and for others. Live to make a difference.