

Made for a Purpose

Exploring God's Plan for Life

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Made For a Purpose

There is not much in life that can compare with a mother's feeling towards her new-born baby: no matter how small, it is an absolutely perfect miracle from head to toes. One cannot help but admire these tiny little fingers as they gently embrace the one big finger offered and holding on with all the strength this small little body can muster. No human product can match the marvelous functions of this new-born creature - everything is made for a purpose.

The true purpose of any article made can be determined only by the designer and manufacturer, the creator of the particular item. In the case of man, this is God alone! Of course, things can be alienated from their original purpose.

A bread-knife can become a murder-weapon.

Atomic power may be used to create energy for a community, or used to destroy it.

The life of a person who seeks to live according to the planned purpose of his creator, is the one who has true purpose in this life. Such a person has a sensible and realistic aim. Most people realise this. There are just two problems involved. What happens when God's purpose and my aims disagree? Most people decide ("just this one time") in favour of their own desires.

The second problem is even more subtle: How do I know what God's purpose and aim is for my life? How sure can I be whether this or that holy book, claiming to be the revelation from God, is the Truth?

In another booklet in this series DARE TO COMPARE, obtainable from us, this question is answered convincingly.

The Gospel, meaning simply “GOOD NEWS”, shows God’s viewpoint of mankind. This is a very pessimistic view - not without reason - as we have learned through bitter experience. But the Gospel also shows the way out of confusion, deception, purposelessness, aimlessness and anxiety. Here is a brief summary of what the Gospel is.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Many lengthy volumes have been written to answer this question. Let us look at the very basics only. Thereafter, you should read and study it yourself.

“GOSPEL” means “good news”, There are many types of good news in the world, but in the Bible it simply means that its message really is ‘good news’. God has opened a way to reconcile man with Himself. This has been progressively prepared from the beginning of mankind. Let us look at the people mentioned at the beginning of the Bible.

THINGS WENT BAD

At first man lived in peace and harmony with God. Then came the fall: Adam (in Hebrew simply meaning “man”) and Eve, driven by their selfish desires and interests, were out to fulfill their own will under the “guidance” of Satan: they wanted to be like God. Pride and presumption made them rebellious against their Lord. Consequently, they were cast out of the Garden of Eden. Their offspring very soon followed their parents’ example and proved the corruption of man who lives outside the rule of God. One murdered his own brother.

From then on we read of the rebellion and corruption of mankind. We all are born with a compelling drive within us to sin. No man ever needed instruction in bad behaviour of any description. Everybody is born with a potential for it. The Bible puts it this way:

“... the Lord saw how wicked everyone on earth was and how evil their thoughts were all the time...” (Genesis 6:5)

Mankind, however, - and this is true today - minimizes God's verdict as a kind of exaggeration. They choose to be optimistic, believing in self-improvement. God never shared that view. In the New Testament we read:

“We know that the law (commandments of God) is spiritual; but I am mortal man (carnal - Latin: carnis = flesh, so this means fleshly-minded), sold as a slave to sin.

I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate.

... I know that good does not live in me - that is, in my human nature.

For even though the desire to do good is in me, I am not able to do it.

I don't do the good I want to do; instead I do the evil that I do not want to do.

... So I find that this law is at work; when I want to do what is good, what is evil is the only choice I have.

My inner being delights in the law of God. But I see a different law at work in my body - a law that fights against the law which my mind approves of. It makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is at work in my body.” (Romans 7:14-23)

If you are honest with yourself, don't you feel compelled to consent to the truth of this statement? This honest

realization actually is the first stepping stone to healing! The worst of all deception is when we compare ourselves with others, and conclude that we are not all that bad after all. When we realize our condition before God, however, we may try to compensate for it by religious "duties" and "good works". We might even hold ourselves capable of erasing our sin.

The great flood was a judgement of God. Only Noah and his closest family "found favour in the eyes of the Lord... Noah was a righteous man, blameless... Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:8,9). **Noah walked with God** What then was the nature of his righteousness? He refused to participate in sin and acted on God's Word. This is what faith is all about.

BUILDING TOWERS THAT REACH THE SKY

Sad to say, the descendants of Noah were not better than mankind before the flood. They thought out their plan and said:

"Come on! Let's make bricks. . . to build with and tar to hold them together.' They said, 'Now let's build a city with a tower that reaches the sky, so that we can make a name for ourselves. . .'" (Genesis 11:3, 4)

Why does one bum brick? To make it water resistant and strong. Why should one use bitumen for mortar? It may not be stronger than clay, but again it is water resistant. Why would anyone want to build a tower that reaches to heaven? One reason is given:

"Let us make a name for ourselves". It is interesting that God said to Abraham, His servant: "I will... make your name famous..." (Genesis 12:2)

Abraham's name has significance, for God did make it famous. The people who wanted to make a name for themselves - who knows them? There is a second underlying reason why the tower was built. It was their means of escaping a possible further flood judgement by God. Should the water rise again as a result of their rebellion, they would be quite safe on the top of the tower. That is what they thought. When their tower was built ("with its top in the heavens") we read, not without irony:

"And the Lord came DOWN to see the city and the tower. " (Genesis 11:5)

Ever since then man has tried to build "towers" to escape the judgement of God - philosophical "towers", political ones, but predominantly religious "towers". These are the religious systems that promise to safeguard us against judgement following our failure to live in accordance with the Law of God, which is His requirement for communion with Him.

"I am the Lord your God!

You shall have no other gods before Me!

You shall not make for yourself a graven image!

You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain!"

Added to this are the laws regulating relations between people:

"Honour thy father and mother, do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, lie or covet anything that is not yours. " (See Exodus 20: 1-17)

The New Testament puts the last part like this:

"If you love someone, you will never do him wrong; to love, then, is to obey the whole Law." (Romans 13:10)

Where is the man or woman with such love? Well, we say, "I love you!" But what we mean is "I want you for myself!"

SELFISH OR OBEDIENT

Abram or, as he was later called, Abraham, lived in a society like this. God called him away from his family and religious environment - and he obeyed. He was by no means a perfect man (Genesis 12: 10-20; 15: 1-6 with 16:1-4; 17:15-19; 20:1-11, etc.), but *“he believed the Lord, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”* (Genesis 15:6)

Abraham took God at His Word; he clung to God's covenant. As there is a credit and a debit side in accountancy books, there is an account kept for everyone's life. Every sin - loving someone or something more than God, loving another person less than my own self (and we ought to think this over for a while!), any failure in thought, word or deed - is recorded in “the book” against us. And our good deeds? Where do they appear? Here is bad news: it is our duty to perform them!

Jesus once said:

“ . . . when you have done all you have been told to do, say, ‘We are ordinary servants; we have only done our duty’.” (Luke 17: 10).

Elsewhere we read about Abraham:

“ . . . His faith and his actions worked together; his faith was made perfect through his actions.” (James 2:22).

Works can never compensate for sin.

Imagine a murderer who is brought before the judge and proven guilty of taking the life of an innocent person. After the prosecutor has convincingly argued his case and has appealed that this man should be given the maximum punishment, life imprisonment, the judge gives the accused a final opportunity to plead his case. “Your honour”, says the accused, “it is quite true that I have killed this person. No doubt, I am guilty. But please,

try to be fair and see the other side as well. I have always respected my mother; I have never missed a day at work for the last five years; I have always paid my income tax to the government; I have even helped some street boys with bread and milk when most other people went past them and never cared; I have gone without food or drink for weeks at a time to identify with the poor and suffering; I have never been too proud to pray... And there is much more I could tell you of the many, many good things I have done in my life. Don't you think it is quite unfair to judge me on that one mistake I did? Can't you accept that I have done so much more good than bad?"

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There is no way that any judge anywhere in the world could bend the rules and let such a man go free. Good works are expected from us anyway, but we have to give account for our sin.

The good news, however, is that it was Abraham's *faith* that was accounted on the credit side: "*Abraham believed God - this was reckoned to him as righteousness.*"

In Abraham and through his descendants God wanted to show mankind the basis of a life with Him and His principle of reconciliation after disobedience. By conscious or unconscious disobedience we actually declare war against God. We become rebels. But God offers us peace!

Israel was to bring the good news of the one God and His plan for man to a world groping in the darkness of religion that was based on deception of man and demons (spiritism, etc.). But Israel expediently "forgot" the God of Abraham and lived in their godless, though religious, independence.

Again God intervened when He sent Moses. The Israelites, living under bondage in Egypt, were rescued by mighty signs and wonders which God performed. No one thereafter was unaware of the majesty and power of God. God made a covenant with Israel. This is now called the “Old Covenant”, or “Old Testament”. God commanded that Israel follow a new way of life. He gave His great commandment, and stated:

“Today I am giving you a choice between good and evil, between life and death.

If you obey the commands of the Lord your God, which I give you today, if you love Him, obey Him, and keep all His laws, then you will prosper and become a nation of many people. The Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are about to occupy. But if you disobey and refuse to listen, and are led away to worship other gods, you will be destroyed - I warn you here and now. You will not live long in that land across the Jordan that you are about to occupy.

I am now giving you the choice between life and death, between God’s blessing and God’s curse, and I call heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Choose life.

Love the Lord your God, obey Him and be faithful to Him, and then you and your descendants will live long in the land that He promised to give your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” (Deuteronomy 30: 15-20)

BREAKING GOD’S COMMAND

But what would’ happen, if a man were to break one of the commandments? Would he be lost?

“You will be doing the right thing if you obey the law of the Kingdom, which is found in the scripture, ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’”

But if you treat people according to their outward appearance, you are guilty of sin, and the Law condemns you as a law-breaker. Whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all. For the same one who said, 'Do not commit adultery', also said, 'Do not commit murder'. Even if you do not commit adultery, you have become a law-breaker if you commit murder." (James 2:8-11)

"If it is one of the common people who sins and becomes guilty of breaking one of the Lord's commands without intending to, then as soon as his attention is called to the sin, he shall bring as his offering a female goat without any defects. He shall put his hand on its head and kill it . . . where the animals for the burnt-offerings are killed.

The priest shall . . . pour out the blood. . . at the base of the altar. . . and he shall bum it on the altar so that the smell pleases the Lord. In this way the priest shall offer the sacrifice for the man's sin, and he will be forgiven." (Leviticus 4:27-31).

A man would be lost if he broke God's Law without seeking reconciliation by means of a sacrifice - God's way! But why did God choose such a cruel way - a sacrifice? I think He wanted

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to impress on the people the seriousness of their sin. If you had to sacrifice, kill and burn your favourite pet for the next sin you are to commit - surely you would exercise absolute self restraint to avoid it! God wanted His people to control themselves and live for Him alone. But, as people are, they murmured and rebelled, and eventually fell into idolatry and complete darkness. God, together with His new order for life, was not only abandoned, but forgotten.

All the warnings of God came true. Israel lived in defeat and eventually, in verbal fulfilment of God's prophecy, was dispersed among all nations, living under heavy persecution for many centuries.

Israel, as God's chosen people, was put aside because of disobedience. They had broken the "Old Covenant". Nevertheless, God pursued His plan with mankind. Already, to Adam and Eve, God had spoken of someone to come from their descendants to "crush" the head of Satan. This one had to be one of the descendants of Abraham:

*"And through you I will bless all the nations." Genesis 12:3,
". . . through Isaac . . . you will have the descendants I
have promised . . ."* Genesis 21:12.

THE GREAT PROMISE: THE MESSIAH

The Jews called this expected liberator their Messiah (indicating a King-priest, or ruler, who would represent the people before God). God said that He must come from the tribe of Judah, of the descendants of David:

"I have made a covenant with the man I chose; I have promised my servant David, 'a descendant of yours will always be King; I will preserve your dynasty forever."

I will make Him My first-born Son, the greatest King of all. I will always keep My promise to Him, and My covenant with Him will last forever.

His dynasty will be as permanent as the sky; . . . Once and for all I have promised by My holy name: I will never lie to David.

The Lord made a solemn promise to David - a promise He will not take back: 'I will make one of your sons King, and He will rule after you'.

A Child is born to us! A Son is given to us! And He will be our ruler. He will be called, 'Wonderful Counsellor', 'Mighty God', 'Eternal Father', 'Prince of Peace'.

His royal power will continue to grow; His Kingdom will always be at peace.

He will rule as King David's successor, basing His power on right and justice, from now until the end of time." (Psalm 89:3, 4, 27-35; 132:11; Isaiah 9:6,7).

David's earthly throne was ascended by a son of his - but that kingdom has long since been destroyed, forgotten. Since God speaks of an eternal throne He must have meant something greater. No human kingdom is eternal. Who can be this son the prophet spoke of (born of a virgin — Isaiah 7:14)? It is Jesus, the Messiah: How can He be the Mighty God, Prince of Peace? We will have to leave the answer to God. But where is this peace - the promised justice and righteousness? Where is this Kingdom? Jesus answered these questions in this way:

"The Kingdom of God does not come in such a way as to be seen. No one will say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!'; because the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20, 21)

Those that are citizens of God's Kingdom have peace with God. They have been forgiven and restored to God and have received righteousness. "I no longer have a righteousness of my own, the kind that is gained by obeying the Law. I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is based on faith." (Philippians 3:9)

When Jesus was born He fulfilled the many prophecies of the Old Testament pointing to Himself. He established the Kingdom of God. In Him God has revealed Himself. Jesus lived sinless before a watching world, showing mankind how God expects us to be. He died on the cross

– as *The Sacrifice* that every man needs to be reconciled to God the Father.

“Christ Himself carried our sins in His body to the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. It is by His wounds that you have been healed.” (1Peter 2:24)

This is the “GOOD NEWS” or “GOSPEL”. Without it there is nothing a man can do, except to live according to the commands of his “self” “sold under sin”. When Jesus came, as predicted, He took our guilt and sin on Himself. He suffered the consequences of our sin. The justice that should have hit you, hit Him. Consequently, He said:

“I am the good Shepherd. . . And I am willing to die for them. My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never die. No one can snatch them away from me.” (John 10: 14, 15, 27, 28)

That is the good news! All you cannot do has been done for you. Now you can live the rest of your life in gratitude to God, who became your Saviour (Isaiah 63: 7 -11). Your life belongs to Him, and you, like a sheep that went astray and was later found, may hear His voice and follow Him in faith. He knows His own, for He laid down His life as a ransom (a price paid to buy a slave’s freedom) for them - and gives His own eternal life. That is the good news!

But Jesus did not remain dead! He was raised from the dead! Good news again! He was raised to heaven, and “is at the right-hand side of God, pleading with Him for us.” (Romans 8:34)

There is more good news still! Or is it bad news to you? He is coming again - to judge in righteousness all those who did not want to bow their knees before Him (Phil. 2:9, 10), or were too presumptuous or proud to receive His pardon. But He comes to raise up all those who died physically, but had placed their hope and trust in Him!

GOD CAN BE TRUSTED

All this is part of the New Covenant, or New Testament. It was predicted by the Old Covenant:

"... I will make a new covenant with the people . . . not like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors. ' they did not keep that covenant.

The new covenant that I will make . . . will be this: I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

. . . I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. . ." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

When Jesus died on the cross, the just for the unjust, the New Testament was ratified and is now valid and open for all who wish to receive God's pardon for their sin, His Way, until He returns to pronounce judgement. The good news will not be valid to those who have resisted God's love, or have preferred man-made religion.

However, peace with God does not happen automatically. Although Jesus died for all mankind potentially, only those who avail themselves of

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the offer of pardon receive it. It is, therefore, a personal responsibility to enter into peace with God. We all have been called upon to do so, for the Bible says:

"... God was making all mankind His friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and He has given us the message which tells how He makes them His friends.

Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God Himself were making His appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into His friends!" (2 Corinthians 5:19,20).

We are actually commanded to return to God:

“God has overlooked the times when people did not know Him, but now He commands all of them everywhere to turn away from their evil ways. For He has fixed a day in which He will judge the whole world with justice . . .” (Acts 17:30, 31)

So, in order to be pardoned and acceptable, we must respond to this call and command.

FOREVER FORGIVEN

This happens when you make an assessment of your life, realise the sin in it, confess it to God, and resolve to turn away from it in remorse over it, and ask Jesus to clean you, accept you, and become your Lord.

“Now, the message that we have heard from His Son and announce is this: God is light, and there is no darkness at all in Him. If, then, we say that we have fellowship with Him, yet at the same time live in the darkness, we are lying both in our words and in our actions.

But if we live in the light - just as He is in the light - then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from every sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us.

But... if we say that we have not sinned, we make God out to be a liar, and His word is not in us.” (1 John 1:5-10)

In response to this, God committed Himself:

“. . . I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. . .” (Jeremiah 31:34).

Muslim readers will be offended by the term “Son of God”. It must be said, that the Bible uses this expression

not to suggest that God had an 'affair' with Mary which resulted in the birth of Jesus! It is rather used as a metaphor.

Since it is the sacrifice of Jesus that alone can cleanse and free us from our sins, we receive Him as our Salvation (Hebrew: 'Yeshua' = Jesus). This is the very start of a life in deep union with God. You will now have been cleansed. The filth of your life and heart has been removed. Now your heart must be filled with new things, but first of all with God Himself. He must be allowed and invited (by prayer) to place Himself on the throne of your life and stay in your heart. The Holy Spirit of God will begin to renew your life. Your will is surrendered to His Will.

"He died for all, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but only for Him who died and was raised to life for their sake."

"When anyone is joined to Christ, he is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, Who through Christ changed us from enemies into His friends and gave us the task of making others His friends also." (2 Corinthians 5:15, 17, 18)

A man who has done this becomes the property of God. He is accepted by God on His terms. He is forgiven. He now receives a new type of authority and guidance in God's Word to live

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that new life. It is for God's glory and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. It will lead to a life of beauty and holiness - without being cranky and unbalanced. We are restored to the original meaning and purpose of life - a life where all the fullness of God, not only the spiritual, but also that provided in creation, can be experienced day by day. Perhaps most important of all:

I can know my destiny. There is no longer fear of the future, particularly of death, for my sins are forgotten by God. He says so! And “There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8: 1)

Just as Noah and his family were safe in the Ark, so those that are “in Jesus” are safe from the wrath of God that is to come. God’s justice is satisfied, for all our sins have been punished in Jesus.

This new life brings out new desires:

- Firstly, to live a God-pleasing life in devotion and gratitude in love.
- Secondly, the longing for fellowship with like-minded people.
- And, thirdly, to share this new life and hope with others. That is, indeed, the very purpose of this book.

So we invite you not to be shy, not to put it off until later, but to contact us for more information, or for free and frank discussion on any of the topics of this booklet, without you feeling under any obligation to go further than you wish. You may be assured of our discretion.

If you would like to contact us, please write to the address nearest to you given at the back of this book.

Dear Reader,

Life without purpose is not what God has intended for us. We trust that answering these questions will help you in reflecting on God's true purpose for your own life. Please don't hesitate to share with us your thoughts and answers and we will be happy to send you another free booklet from our series.

1. What is the meaning of the word 'gospel'?
2. Explain why people no longer live in peace and harmony with their Creator?
3. In what way was the building of the tower of Babel a rebellion against God?
4. Was Abraham without sin? – Give reasons.
5. How many of God's commands do we need to break before we are lost?
6. Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah that was expected by the Jewish people? Explain why you believe what you believe.
7. Give some prophecies which were fulfilled in the person of Jesus the Messiah.
8. What should be the response of a person who has gladly received the Good News?
9. Why is it that the very 'Good News' received by some turns out to be 'Bad News' for others?
10. What does it mean to 'become the property of God'?
11. List some of the new desires resulting from a new life with God.

Please send us your answers together with any questions or issues you would like to discuss. – Have you experienced this in your own life? Or can we help you in any way?

Thank you.

**Booklets recommended
for our readers:**

1. Made for a Purpose
2. Dare to compare
3. Destination unknown
4. Dear Abdallah
5. Why trust the Bible
6. Man with a message
7. Qur'an and Bible
8. Follow your heart

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