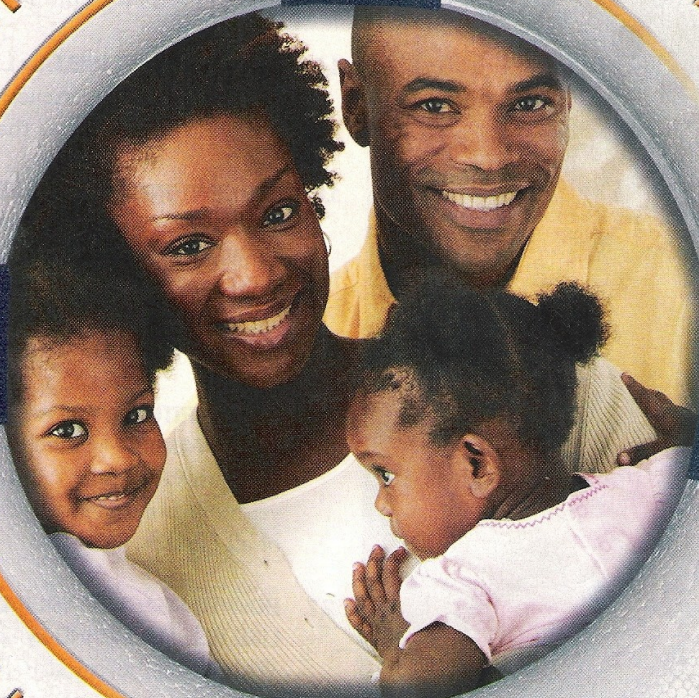


the magazine for virtuous living

January/February 2007

# MESSAGE

A SYSTEM FOR SURVIVAL OF THE TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY BLACK FAMILY



*This article first appeared in the January/February 2007 issue of MESSAGE magazine.  
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BY MARLON T. PERKINS, SR.

## THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

PART ONE

# PURPOSE

### “WHY AM I HERE? WHAT IS MY REAL PURPOSE?”

What should I be doing with my life? This lack of self-understanding and direction is a health problem itself, in a sense, for it can lead to all sorts of emotional stress, including depression, anxiety, and fatigue. . . . It's not only your mind that wants to know your mission—this knowledge is vitally important to your body and spirit as well.”<sup>1</sup>

Implicit in the quotation above is the human quest to find purpose in life. So strong is this desire that it can lead one to attempt almost any feat in its pursuit, and when one fails to attain it, the consequences can be deadly. In book V of *The Brothers Karamazov*, the nine-

teenth-century classic by Russian theologian Fyodor Dostoevsky, the Grand Inquisitor palely observes: “For the secret of man's being is not only to live, but to have something to live for. Without a stable conception of the object of life, man would not consent to go on living, and would rather destroy himself than remain on earth.”<sup>2</sup>

**PURPOSE HAS POWER.** To live with purpose is to live on purpose. This notion is reflected throughout the Bible and everyday life. When calling Jeremiah to be a prophet, God said to him, “Before I made you in your mother's womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work” (Jeremiah 1:5, NCV).<sup>3</sup> What a notion—to think that God has a predetermined purpose for our lives, a special work, a purpose pregnant with potential that, if followed faithfully, would

**“As God reveals to you your purpose, you will find that there is a natural relationship between your giftedness and your purpose.”**

not only glorify Him but also bring us personal fulfillment otherwise unimaginable to the human senses!

Lamentably, however, great masses of people awaken every day to a purpose no more inspiring than paying the bills, saving for a bigger house or boat, or hoping against hope that they don't die within the first month of retirement. It is at once astounding (and sobering) to realize the galactic amount of potential that lies untapped in the lives of millions of people (especially young people) across gender, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic lines—the number of which increases every day. Only eternity could afford us the time and intellectual capacity to fully comprehend the monumental loss of this untapped potential to humanity socially, spiritually, and otherwise. In the apt words of a friend who once wrote to me: “Life tends to lead us about as if by an unseen nose ring tugging hither and yon, and like a beast of burden we follow in mindless obeisance.”

Notwithstanding all of the above, there is hope. Are you one who feels that God is calling you to a larger purpose but you have no clue what that purpose may be or, worse yet, how to begin pursuing it? Here are three things you need to know about purpose.

**1. PURPOSE IS GOD-GIVEN.** Simply stated, God gives you your purpose in life. He speaks directly to you. You don't need to go looking for it. You don't need to worry or fret yourself about what direction your life should take. God may speak through another person, a sermon, a book, or life experience; whatever the medium, the message will be clear to you.

You should also know that God has given to each of us “gifts”—those natural traits, talents, and skills that help to make up who we are. These gifts are intended by God to be employed in the development of your life's purpose. As God reveals to you your purpose, you will find that there is a natural relationship between your giftedness and your purpose. You will feel as if you were born for your purpose.

It should be comforting to know that we need not fret over the direction of our lives. As He did with Jeremiah and countless others of His servants, God will reveal His purposes to us—in His own time. We must remember that God did not part the Red Sea until the children of Israel actually arrived at the Red Sea. God did not simply tell Moses

that He wanted him to build a sanctuary for His presence: He gave Moses the exact specifications for the building.<sup>4</sup> I am told that some missions are so secret for military pilots that they are not given the exact coordinates for their destination until they are actually in the air. If you are not clear as to the direction or purpose for your life, fear not: as you go, you will receive.

**2. PURPOSE IS GOD-GUIDED.** “There is no other truth that compares in importance for successful living with the truth that there is a benevolent God who is working out His plans and purposes in the affairs of men.”<sup>5</sup> Just as God gives us purpose in life, He must be the One who guides that purpose. A personal account here will help to illustrate this point.

Since the age of 13, I have lived with a deep conviction that my life was meant for something—and meant for something definite. Since I was so convinced that I had an ultimate purpose or destiny in life, I lived with a fear of allowing anything—girls, drugs, deviant behavior—to alter my course. Initially, I concluded that I simply had an oversensitive conscience. I would later come to recognize it as the voice of God in my life. This conviction about my future produced such powerfully positive feelings inside of me, feelings of distinction, significance, and importance. I felt that I was cut out for something very meaningful in life. The sheer effect of these feelings always overrode the reality that I had no clue, precisely, what my destiny would be.

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It didn't matter—I just didn't want anything to mess it up.

My life had a turning point. It started during my junior year in college. The Holy Spirit began moving on my heart in very distinct ways. I became more receptive to spiritual things, such as paying attention to the sermon in church and attending Wednesday evening prayer meeting. I even accepted the position of youth leader in my church. Perhaps what was most telling was the fact that the Bible became more interesting to me as I read it. The eyes of my understanding were opening.

I was being called by God but didn't know it. I was being called to become a Christian—and a minister. A struggle ensued in my heart. Although my collegiate studies had been preparing me for a career in law, I knew deep down inside that I had no aspirations to be an attorney. The battle raged on in my heart until one Sabbath afternoon. We had concluded the evening youth service at church, and I walked to my car alongside my pastor. As we walked, I felt impressed to open up and share with him the struggle that was going on in my heart over the ministry. I told him that I was afraid to go into the ministry because I couldn't see where it would lead me. I have never forgotten the words that he spoke to me next. "You know, Marlon," he began, "we are called to live a life of faith." The moment he spoke those words to me my mind instantly opened up. This was the answer to my dilemma—faith! More than that, it was also the answer to my destiny and purpose in life. As I drove home that evening, I felt as if an eight-year burden had been lifted from my shoulders. God had indeed been guiding my life, bringing me to that great point of awakening. And for the first time in my life I was at peace to allow Him to continually guide me in my life's affairs.

*(To be continued in the March/April issue.)*

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1 Caroline Myss, *Sacred Contracts: Awakening Your Divine Potential* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002-2003), p.1.

2 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1879. Translated by Constance Garnett. Source: <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/d/dostoyevsky/d72b/>. Emphasis supplied.

3 Quoted from The Holy Bible, *New Century Version*, copyright © 1987, 1988, 1991 by Word Publishing, Dallas, Texas 75039. Used by permission.

4 See Exodus 25:1-40.

5 Carlyle B. Haynes, *God Sent a Man* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962), p.21.

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Lord always before me" and "I see him who is invisible" is the work experience God is looking for on our résumés (Psalm 16:8; Hebrews 11:27).

If we are practicing the presence of God and walk into a building, who is going to enter with us? That's right, God Himself! What happens when God shows up? The Clark Sisters sum it up beautifully: "When God is in the building, the sin-sick are healed; the dead can be raised; the troubled can leave here troubleless, and the lame can be healed; and the one seeking the Holy Ghost, today can be filled."

**TURN FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS** One day King David knowingly did something wrong and thousands of innocent people died as a result (see 1 Chronicles 21). As I watched the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I caught myself playing the blame game. The following day a sobering question crossed my mind. Today I pose a modified version of it to you. Hopefully, you will prayerfully and honestly answer it. Is your disobedience one of the reasons why so many Black families around you are being destroyed and kept in bondage? Upon seeing the consequences of his action, David repented and pleaded with God to spare the lives of his subjects. Today if we will confess our sins and cast them aside, with the Lord's help Black families will be restored, healed, delivered, and eternally saved!

**CONCLUSION** Jesus is in the operating room and He's ready for surgery. Patients are trying to hang on for dear life. If we humble ourselves, pray, seek God's face, and turn from our wicked ways, God has promised to hear us, forgive our sins, and heal our land. Black families are part of our land and they're wounded and in desperate need of spiritual surgery. The Hurricane Katrina victims pleaded for help day after day, and many perished before the promised help came. Will you continue to let people perish in your community, neighborhood, and home? Will you sit and wait for someone else to save them? I close with this question: Today and every day will you humble yourself, pray, seek God's face, and turn from your wicked ways so that God can hear you, forgive you, and heal your land?

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