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*How Pursuing
the Primary Thing—
Knowing God—*

RESULTS IN
THE SECONDARY THINGS—
THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART

*H*OW DO YOU view yourself? Your perception of who you are affects your attitudes, thoughts, and actions around others. The greatest factor in how you view yourself is your perception of what the most important person in your life thinks of you.

That person's perception of you can be faulty, of course, but that doesn't immediately change your response to their words. The only way to let truth liberate you from lies that can cripple you is to embrace God as the most important Person in your life and listen to Him. He knows the truth. He created you.

Will you let Him speak truth to your spirit? Here are truths about you He declares in the Scriptures:

- “I accept you” (Romans 15:7).
- “You are a precious person to Me and I am continually thinking about you” (Psalm 139:17–18).
- “I’m continually devoted to you and will provide all that you need to fulfill My purpose for you” (Romans 8:31–32, 38–39).
- “I’ve adopted you into My family and will take care of you, lead you, discipline you, and develop you as your Father” (Galatians 4:5–6).
- “I’ll live in you, and you’ll never have to be alone as My Son, Jesus Christ, had to be when He died on the cross for you” (Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 13:5b).
- “I have a wonderful future for you, that you will know joy and satisfaction for all eternity” (Romans 8:18).
- “I have a unique plan of good works for you to accomplish” (Ephesians 2:10).
- “My plan is unique for you because no one else has your exact physical features, upbringing, talents, and abilities, and even your unique weaknesses” (Psalm 139:13–16).
- “I’ll continue to work in you because My glory is at stake” (Philippians 2:13; Psalm 23:3).
- “I’ll make you into a most attractive person in My eyes and allow you to fulfill My plan as you present your life to Me” (Romans 8:29; 12:1–2).

Let these truths from God uproot any lies that challenge His liberating truth. Use the shield of faith to knock down the lies that are thrown at you day by day.

Finding Real Meaning and Purpose in Life

When we know God as He really is, we begin to know ourselves more accurately. And when we have a right relationship with Him, we understand our purpose for living. In fact, a significant purpose for living can be found only by being rightly related to our Creator—the One who created us for Himself (Colossians 1:16). Augustine is often quoted as saying, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.”

One who has real purpose has found someone worth dying for and worth living for. Since most of life is lived with a routine, a person with true purpose has found meaning even in the routines of life. God tells us that even the mundane—eating, drinking, or whatever we do—can be an opportunity to experience and display His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). (The glory of God will be explored and explained in the final chapter of this book.)

A person with real meaning and purpose has learned the secret to overcoming boredom. Many gifted people with very “prestigious” jobs are bored and unfulfilled in their deepest longings. Why? They can do their job with a fraction of their God-given capacities—let’s say 60 percent. They have a 40 percent boredom factor. God designed every part of our lives and bodies to be presented to Him (Romans 6:11–13; 12:1). God takes care of and uses what is presented to Him. He knows how to use every talent, gift, and ability we have. Even when a given task may not require all of our abilities, as we are yielded to Him, every part of our being can know His satisfying fellowship as we obey Him.

The True Meaning of Success

A person with real meaning and purpose has also come to grips with the true meaning of success. Success is finding, following, and fulfilling God's will for our life. The greatest statement of success ever written summarizes the life of the one perfect Person, Jesus. As the end of His life on earth approached, He said, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

The apostle Paul encouraged others to follow him as he followed Christ. Look at his pursuit: "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). And look at his accomplishment: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

The Desire for Direction

Every human yearns to have direction. The breakthrough comes when we realize that we are a sheep in need of a divine shepherd to lead us (see Jeremiah 10:23). God leads us in His righteous paths in order to display to the world what a kind, merciful, and good shepherd He is (Psalm 23:3).

When there is a greater desire to know God's will than to know God, confusion will result. The thirst for direction is satisfied as one builds his life around the Shepherd.¹

We are created by Christ and for Christ (Colossians 1:16). Our perfect Creator in His goodness desires us to experience the gift of enjoying Him. Since we are dependent creatures,

when we live independent of Him, we must look to someone or something to attempt to meet the basic thirsts of our heart, including direction for our lives. The testimony of Scripture is consistent in describing the outcome of facing independently of God. Such independence results in *futility* (1 Samuel 12:21), *emptiness* (Jeremiah 2:5), *vanity* (Psalm 127:1-2), and *uselessness* (Romans 3:12).

Jesus summarized it by saying that “nothing” from God’s eternal viewpoint can be accomplished independent of Him. “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The Desire for Contentment

How can a person really be free from the strain and pull of having to get ahead? How can one be free from being controlled by an unhealthy desire for status, possessions, and prestige? There is a secret—but it is an “open secret” that God has revealed to those who will look in His holy Word. The secret is learning to be content with what we have. Contentment is something that must be learned. No one is born with it, and only God can teach us to be content. However, contentment can be experienced in any circumstance in life. It is an attitude that the apostle Paul himself learned, no matter the circumstance:

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both

of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11-13)

Notice how Paul alludes to a secret in verse 12 and reveals the secret in verse 13. The secret is our relationship to Christ. Paul wrote these words while in jail. He was behind bars, but he was also in Christ. Christ will give us the strength to do all that He has for us to do in any circumstance.

Listen to the psalmist's contentment: "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth" (Psalm 73:25). All we need to be content is knowing Christ is in heaven and chooses to provide what we need.

Let every longing for another person, position, or possession remind you of God's loving attention to you. That truth caused King David to declare:

How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.
When I awake, I am still with You. (Psalm 139:17-18)

When such longings come to you, recall Jesus' words to come to Him to quench your thirst:

Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

Few people ever meet a person who is truly at peace with himself. This kind of contentment is what frees one from selfish ambition and sets the person free to experience God's ambition for his life. Ask God to do this miracle in you!

The Desire for Security

The craving to be "in control" comes out of a knowledge that our self-interest will look after the people and things that we deem important. Are we really ever in control? Can we really completely control the decisions of others, the weather, the economy, or even our health? Our security must lie in being under the control of Another. One can find security in God because a believer in Christ can know these truths:

- "God is for us" (Romans 8:31).
- We cannot be separated from His love (see Romans 8:38–39).
- God's purposes cannot ultimately be defeated – even an unbeliever understood this (see Acts 5:38–39).
- God will guard all that I place in His hands (2 Timothy 1:12).

May this book aid you in finding a true delight in the Lord and as a by-product experience the deepest desires of your heart! I have shared the following prayer of dedication and trust with thousands of people. Would you be willing to pray this prayer in faith before you continue to read this book?

"God, I want to know You above all else in life. I need the motivation, encouragement, and wisdom to know how, but I desire it and want to desire it more. Give me the grace to repent of anything in

my life that is hindering my relationship to You. I believe You will overcome all obstacles and accomplish this in my life!

“For Your name’s sake and for my eternal benefit, Amen.”

Note

1. See Bill Thrasher, *Living the Life God Has Planned: A Guide to Knowing God’s Will* (Chicago: Moody, 2001), for further insight on this topic.