

*GET UNSTUCK. DISCOVER YOUR PURPOSE.
MAKE THE WORLD FLOURISH.*

DO GOOD WORKS

**AM I DOING WHAT I
WAS MADE TO DO?**

STEPHEN BLANDINO

Praise for *Do Good Works*

Do Good Works isn't just another book. It is a personification of who Stephen Blandino is—this is his life message. His passion for calling and life purpose is with the belief that there is more in you, for you, and through you. You'll want everyone you know to be called to *good works*.

- **Dr. Sam Chand**, Leadership Consultant and Author of *Leadership Pain*

"*Do Good Works* is a compelling and practical guide to discover the unique purpose God created you to fulfill. If your purpose is unclear, you're dissatisfied with your job, or if you've ever questioned how God could use you to make a difference in the world, this book is for you. I believe in Stephen Blandino, and his book will help you find focus and live out the good works God made you to do."

- **Tony Morgan**, Founder & Chief Strategic Officer of The Unstuck Group

"There may not be a single more important question to answer than, 'What is the purpose of my life?' That's why the book you're holding in your hands is so powerful. Stephen Blandino walks you through a process to actually identify and clearly articulate the unique purpose God created you to fulfill. I want to maximize this one life I was given, which is why I highly recommend *Do Good Works* to anyone seeking to better understand their God-given purpose. Whether you're starting out, starting over, or just looking for clarity and direction, this book will help you understand and live out God's unique design for your life."

- **Chris Railey**, National Director of Church Multiplication Network

"I've been engaged in the topic of life planning for almost three decades as a speaker, writer and coach. In *Do Good Works*, Stephen Blandino has given us one of the most practical and accessible resources I've seen on this important topic. Follow this process and get started on the good works God has prepared in advance just for you."

- **Steve Moore**, President, Nexleader

"I am thankful that Pastor Stephen Blandino has included my story in his new book, *Do Good Works*, within the chapter, "You Were Created on Purpose." This book spoke to me today, but would have helped me tremendously when I was 18 and struggling with the big picture/worldview questions of who created me, why am I here, what is my value, identity and purpose. I know many people today who are currently struggling with these issues. Thank you Stephen for showing the truth of who we are!"

- **Rebecca Kiessling**, International Pro-Life Speaker, Attorney, and Author

"Having known and observed Stephen's life for over 30 years, it is without question that God has gifted him to help others discover their purpose in life. *Do Good Works* is a compilation of his years of living out each of these truths, not only personally, but in the lives of many others. This book will give you a concrete path to discover the purpose—God's unique good works—for your life."

- **Darius Johnston**, Lead Pastor, Christ Church, Fort Worth, Texas

"Stephen Blandino is a leading voice on the topic of living with purpose. Why? Because he lives it out, and he's led countless others—including homemakers and business leaders and pastors—to find new meaning in their life. *Do Good Works* will guide you to find God's purpose and live it out each day."

- **Jeff Galley**, Team Leader for Life Groups and Missions, Life.Church

"'Sad,' was how I first felt when I read the last page of *Do Good Works*. It was over, but I wasn't finished. I read *Do Good Works* on a plane, and I could have circled for hours, never needing to land. More than words on the pages, *Do Good Works* is a clear path to God's purpose for our lives. Stephen, thanks for the experience."

- **Gary Randle**, Co-Founder and Executive Director of HOPE Farm, Fort Worth, Texas

“*Do Good Works* is a hyper-practical resource that empowers the reader to understand their God-given wiring, and then turn God’s design into real world actions that bless everyone around them. The book is packed full of easy to use personal inventory instruments that allow the reader to create a comprehensive plan for activating their divine purpose, on purpose. Biblically sound, practically focused, simple to apply and enjoyable to read.

- **Steve Pike**, President, Urban Islands Project

Stephen Blandino's *Do Good Works* is a master tool for clarifying one's purpose and calling. In addition to his fresh insights on the subject, I found the reflective process he took me through as a reader to be practical, healing, and incredibly clarifying. If you long to make the most of the life and gifts God has given you, this book is your perfect place to start.

- **Lennon Noland**, North Texas Director, Chi Alpha Campus Ministries

“Stephen provides an outstanding blueprint to discover one’s life purpose. His unique and capable communication style not only gives a theology to one’s life purpose but practical tools on how one can discover their unique, God given life purpose.”

- **Jimmy White**, Director of Men’s Discipleship, General Council of the Assemblies of God

Do Good Works

Am I Doing What I Was Made to Do?

STEPHEN BLANDINO

Do Good Works: Am I Doing What I Was Made to Do?

Copyright © 2017 by Stephen Blandino

ISBN: 978-1540571793

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without prior written permission from the author.

This book is manufactured in the United States.

Cover Design & Interior Layout by VillaDesigned.com

Editing by Trisha Heddlesten

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, Copyright © 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked MSG are taken from *THE MESSAGE*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2001. Use by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

Scripture quotations marked TLB are taken from The Living Bible Copyright © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All Rights Reserved.

Scripture quotations marked AMP are taken from AMPLIFIED BIBLE, Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission (Lockman.org).

DEDICATION

To Karen

You are my true love.

I am inspired by your relationship with Christ,
and I'm grateful to do good works with you.

Contents

Introduction	13
--------------------	----

Part 1: Do Good Works

Chapter 1: Good Works.....	19
----------------------------	----

Part 2: Get Unstuck & Discover Your Purpose

Chapter 2: You Were Created ON Purpose	33
Chapter 3: You Were Cultivated FOR Purpose.....	51
Chapter 4: You Were Crafted WITH Purpose	69
Chapter 5: You Were Called TO Purpose.....	87
Chapter 6: Turning Ten Facts into One Focus	105

Part 3: Make the World Flourish

Chapter 7: Flourish: Matching Your Good Works With a Good Role.....	127
Chapter 8: Empowered to Do Good Works.....	145

My Good Works Journal

Appendix A: Pain, Experience, and Destiny Markers	157
Appendix B: Personality, Spiritual Gifts, Abilities and Skills, Knowledge, and Passions	159
Appendix C: Calling and Values.....	163
Appendix D: Good Works Puzzle.....	169
Appendix E: Good Works Statement.....	174
Appendix F: My Good Roles.....	181

Acknowledgements.....	185
Notes	186
About the Author	188
Additional Resources.....	189

Introduction

For years I've taught, written, and coached others on the subject of purpose. Whether speaking at a conference, teaching in a classroom, investing in my staff, engaging in a coaching conversation, or writing an article, the subject of life purpose has always fascinated me. I particularly enjoy helping younger leaders clarify what God has called them to do. With a long runway ahead of them, I see years of potential just waiting to be discovered, developed, and deployed.

But that's not the case for everyone.

Countless times, as I've taught this material, I've heard the agony of regret: "I wish I'd heard this 30 years ago." You can hear the lament, the disappointment, the what-ifs and what-could-have-beens, sucking the life out of the years that remain. Like a menacing storm cloud brewing on the horizon, feelings of fear and inadequacy mock them with an ominous message: "It's too late!"

Maybe you feel the same way. Maybe *what is* doesn't look anything like the *what if* you dreamed of in earlier years. Maybe the years have passed with nothing to show but an unremarkable collection of disappointments coupled with your fair share of scars, pain, and heartache. With it, your confidence has turned to doubt, and your optimistic aspirations have turned into palpable cynicism.

Or maybe you're on the other end of the spectrum, just beginning your journey, but frantically searching for direction. Time is running out to be the next sensation to hit the market, attract the most followers, secure the most downloads, or garner the most views. If you don't figure it out soon, you'll turn 30, and then it'll be too late. You'll be the old, irrelevant, out-of-touch guy still trying to be cool with his hip hair and stylish jeans.

Regardless of which end of the scale you find yourself on, the same question haunts you: *Am I doing what I was made to do?*

Like a permanent fixture in the landscape of our future, the question doesn't go away. At first it whispers. Then it mumbles. Before long stutters and babbling become all-out shouts and screams like the passengers on a plane in a quick decent. The end is near, and the question still hasn't been answered.

Am I doing what I
was made to do?

I came face-to-face with “the question” in my early 30s. I had just transitioned into a new role with a fledgling organization. While I enjoyed what I was doing, I didn't have a clear purpose for my life. I didn't know the “thing” God created me to do. After all, a job is not a purpose. It's simply one role through which my purpose can be fulfilled. Purpose is much bigger, like an umbrella. Once the umbrella is opened, we can choose roles to place under the umbrella that will help us carefully and strategically fulfill our purpose.

At this pivotal moment in my life, I met Steve Moore. Steve and I

worked in the same organization, and I quickly discovered the extraordinary sense of purpose that accompanied his life. He was like the purpose Yoda. Every word he spoke and action he took seemed to exude meaning and intention. “Why can’t I be like that?” I thought.

His clarity was born out of a deep awareness of his past, his strengths, and his passions, but more importantly, out of a growing personal relationship with God. His life wasn’t just some new version of a self-help seminar on display; it was a living, breathing expression of purpose formed out of a Biblical worldview.

To my delight, I quickly discovered that Steve enjoyed helping young leaders discover their purpose, too. Needless to say, I was a candidate. No, he didn’t ask me if I wanted to sit at the feet of Yoda and drink from his fountain of wisdom. I sought him out. I asked for help. I set aside all of my pre-conceived notions and started from the beginning. That single decision changed the trajectory of my life.

In my conversations with Steve, he reminded me of the words the apostle Paul wrote to the church in the city of Ephesus:

“For we are God’s handiwork,
created in Christ Jesus to *do good works*,
which God prepared in advance for us to do”
(Ephesians 2:10, NIV).

That phrase “do good works” captured my attention. Equally captivating was the fact that God determined these “good works” before I was even born. He prepared them in advance as my assignment, my task, my calling, and my mission.

Over the course of the next year, Steve used this verse as a framework to help me clarify the good works God had called me to do. I embarked on a journey that would cause me to reflect on my history, explore my identity, and wrestle with a practical expression of good works that would glorify

God.

I worked on my “good works project” for a while, and then I’d put it down for a few weeks. After several iterations of working and reflecting, I emerged with clarity. I’m sure it took longer than it needed to, but I was determined not to rush the process. I wanted clarity over urgency, confidence over quickness, understanding over speed. At the end of that year, I was clear. I was able to boil my good works down to one sentence...one clear, focused, and deeply meaningful sentence that articulated my life’s mission. You can, too.

That’s what this book is all about. I’m going to take you on a journey to discover how God created you on purpose, cultivated you for purpose, crafted you with purpose, and called you to purpose. Then, I’m going to help you link all of those puzzles pieces together to clarify the good works God prepared for you to do.

Before it’s over, I’ll help you articulate your good works in a single sentence, and walk you through a process to identify the best roles where you can fulfill the thing God created you to do. So, let’s get started.

Part 1

Do Good Works

CHAPTER 1

Good Works

If you could pick one person from history that did “good works”—somebody that you admire, and might even want to emulate—who would you pick?

Maybe you would pick a history-making person like George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. After all, being the first U.S. president, or changing the future for thousands of slaves, would certainly qualify as “good works,” wouldn’t it? Or, maybe you would choose someone that selflessly served the poor, like Mother Teresa, or changed the face of technology, like Steve Jobs, or did what others considered impossible, like Orville and Wilbur Wright when they invented the airplane. Each one is known for charting new territory, and leaving an unforgettable fingerprint on the world.

You might answer the “good works” question from a different perspective. Perhaps you would turn your attention to someone less famous, but no less impactful to you—like a close friend, parent, or grandparent. I barely

knew my grandmother, but she certainly did good works in her lifetime. Even though she lived in a small village in England, dozens of people are following Jesus today because she literally “prayed them” into the Kingdom of God. Unremarkable to many, but unforgettable to a few.

Your “good works” hero might be honored by a great monument, towering in the halls of history, or anonymity may be their middle name. Regardless of whom you picked, something set them apart in your mind. They did something that mattered.

Who would you pick?

I’d pick Jesus!

If anybody in history did “good works,” it was a carpenter that walked dusty roads with a rag tag group of followers. One read through the Gospels and you quickly discover just how good Jesus was (and is). I’m not sure what comes to your mind when you think about Jesus, but I’m guessing you have a definite reaction.

Maybe you picture a “Sunday school Jesus,” teaching the little children gathered around him while his disciples tap their watches, wondering when he’s going to wrap it up so they can get on with “more important” matters.

Or, maybe you picture Ricky Bobby (played by Will Ferrell), praying to eight pound, six ounce “baby Jesus.” Baby Jesus hasn’t disrupted anyone or anything (yet). That’s how some people like Him. Confined. Constrained. Controlled.

Perhaps you picture Jesus extending grace to the messiest lives, while throwing the religious elite into fits and dismantling the overbearing rules of the Pharisees.

Still, when you think of Jesus, your mind might go to the vivid imagery of His crucifixion. His arms outstretched, blood dripping from his brow as thorns pierced his skull. You imagine the nails driven through his

hands as His sinless life was nailed to a sinner's cross. A sign was fastened above his head announcing the charge against him: "This is Jesus. King of the Jews."

The story didn't end there. Soldiers gambled for his clothing, mockers made their indictment, and yet, Jesus remained silent. Darkness filled the land. The eerie sky hung with the sinister laugh of death. At 3:00 pm, any lingering glimpses of hopeful expectancy evaporated when Jesus shouted, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

The winds of divine rejection encircled the cross. With every agonizing breath, his followers held their breath, watching from a distance. In a moment...it was over. His words split the pages of history: "It. Is. Finished."

Jesus was dead.

Hell celebrated.

Heaven wept.

At that very moment the earth shook, rocks split apart, and tombs opened. The curtain in the Temple was torn in two, and terror struck the Roman soldiers. Their scornful mocking was traded for a divine revelation: "This man truly was the Son of God!"

I don't know about you, but on the surface, that doesn't seem like a very good ending for someone who did so many good works. But, when you truly understand Jesus' good works, it makes sense. Complete sense.

The good works of Jesus—that special mission He was sent to do—is captured so well in the Gospel of Luke: "At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. But he said, 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.' And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea" (Luke 4:42-44, NIV).

These verses provide us with a different picture of Jesus. At first

glance, it's not a picture of love or laughter, of comfort or compassion. In fact, it almost appears routine, maybe even boring. Jesus was in a solitary place (probably praying), and then he gets interrupted before heading off to the next speaking gig. Nothing exciting about that, is there?

Actually, yes! There is.

This is a picture of *Jesus on mission*. These three simple verses hold three distinct characteristics of Jesus' commitment to *do good works*...three qualities that we can embrace in our lives, too.

1. Clarity: Jesus Knew His Good Works

Jesus stated his purpose succinctly in this passage: "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is *why* I was sent" (emphasis added). Jesus' purpose wasn't a fleeting thought. It wasn't a hope, a hint, or a hunch. It wasn't the flavor of the month—some wish or whim—or a fad that's here today and gone tomorrow. Jesus' purpose—the good works for which He came—was front and center in His life.

Other Scriptures further highlight His purpose. Luke said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost. ¹ Matthew said, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."² And John said, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."³

If you were going to boil your good works—that special something that God prepared in advance for you to do—down to one word, what word would you choose?

If you could boil Jesus' good works down to one word, I believe it would be *redemption*. Jesus came to redeem all of humanity and all of creation. Through His death, Jesus paid the penalty that all of us deserved, and offered us life that none of us deserved. Through his sacrifice, Jesus made the restoration of all things possible (Colossians 1:15-23, NIV). One word defines His mission: *redemption*.

What about you? If you were going to boil your good works—that special something that God prepared in advance for you to do—down to one word, what word would you choose?

In his book, *Aspire*, Kevin Hall challenges readers to describe their life with one word. He equates it to turning to a page in a book with only one word on it. Kevin observes, “Instead of seeing three hundred different words on the page, the person’s attention, and intention, is focused immediately on that single word, that single gift.”⁴ As that word comes into focus, it opens a door to amazing opportunity. In Hall’s words, “What the individual focuses on expands.”⁵

Jesus had unwavering clarity about His purpose, and, as a result, His good works have expanded beyond anything His earliest followers could have ever imagined. Today, over two billion people identify themselves as Christians. Jesus is unquestionably the most influential person in history. He was never wishy-washy about why He was on the earth. He knew his purpose. One word: *redemption*.

It’s equally important to understand the source of your good works. Jesus not only knew His purpose, He knew who originated it. Verse 43 concludes with these words, “...because that is why I was sent.”

If you’re *sent* somewhere, then *somebody sent you*. When guys go to the grocery store, two things are usually true. First, we have a list. We tend to get distracted by the basics—Oreos, ice cream, chips, hot sauce—so we’re typically sent with a list to keep us on mission. Second, somebody sent us. If you’re married, it’s probably your wife. Unless you own a manly grill, you probably only go to the grocery store when you’re *sent* (or when you run out of toilet paper). And who sent you makes a difference. What you do/buy in the store is guided by who sent you.

Jesus was *sent* on a mission, and his mission originated with His Father in Heaven. Jesus said, “Peace be with you. As the *Father has sent me*, so I am sending you” (John 20:21). And Acts 3:26 says, “When God raised up his servant, Jesus, *he sent him* first to you people of Israel, to bless you by turning each of you back from your sinful ways” (emphasis added).

Your purpose isn't *your* purpose. It's *His* purpose at work in you. It's not *your* good works, but His good works. *You can't divorce your purpose from God's plan.*

If you're going to fulfill your purpose in life, you can't rob the “sent” from your assignment. Your purpose isn't *your* purpose. It's *His* purpose at work in you. It's not *your* good works, but *His* good works. *You can't divorce your purpose from God's plan.* It simply doesn't work that way.

Your purpose isn't found in yourself, your friends, your spouse, your fiancé, your kids, or a date with that special someone. You'll never discover the meaning you're searching for in the person you're working for. What about your school, bank account, or that dream vacation? Nope! Not there either. How about nicer, bigger, faster...so you can look better, smarter, or happier. Huh-uh! Nothing wrong with any of them, but they're not carriers of your calling.

Good works begin and end with one person: God. Your Creator created you with your purpose in mind. He created you to do good works, which He prepared in advance for you to do. No matter where those good works take you, they will always have a lineage that traces back to God.

2. Focus: Jesus Avoided Distractions to His Good Works

Because Jesus understood his purpose, He refused to let anything, or anyone, distract Him. He was unrelenting in His focus. Luke said, “At day-break, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving

them” (Luke 4:42, NIV).

Why would the people try to keep Jesus from leaving them? Probably because He was healing the sick and casting out demons (Luke 4:38-41). If Jesus did that for you, you’d open up a spare bedroom in your house. You’d throw a party, offer Him a job, give Him a signing bonus...anything to get Him to stay. And stay is what these people wanted. Their intentions might have been good, but Jesus refused to lose sight of his mission. That’s an important lesson to remember: *The good intentions of others can cause you to live unintentionally.*

Several years ago I heard author and pastor Gerald Brooks share a story about his son’s baseball coach. This coach would tell Gerald’s son,

The good intentions of others can cause you to live unintentionally.

“You’ve always heard it said that if you want to hit the ball big, you’ve got to keep your eye on the ball, but that’s really not true.”

Hearing that counsel would make any of us suspicious, or at the very least hesitant. But then he said, “If you want to hit the ball big, you have to keep your eye on the *center* of the ball.” The lesson was clear: if you aim small, you’ll hit big.

If you want to pursue your purpose with unrelenting focus, you’re going to have to aim small. Aiming small doesn’t mean dreaming small. It means dreaming with focus. You have to avoid the distractions, ignore the naysayers, and focus your attention on what matters most. If you let others constantly distract you, your dream will turn into a delusion. And if you try to do everything, you’ll end up doing nothing. Focus is the key.

That’s what Jesus did. Rather than letting the crowds persuade Him, He was persuaded by His mission. Had He sacrificed the mission to satisfy the people, He would have never served the people with His ultimate mission. Saying no today keeps you on mission tomorrow.

3. Completion: Jesus Fulfilled His Good Works

The passage concludes, “And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea” (Luke 4:44, NIV). Because Jesus had unwavering clarity and exhibited unrelenting focus, He was able to complete His mission. He *kept on*.

Viktor Frankl, the Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist, and Holocaust survivor, developed a “kept on” attitude toward life mission during and after his horrific experiences in the concentration camps. Frankl said, “Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life. Everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus everyone’s task is as unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.”

Are you trying to repeat someone else’s life? Don’t minimize your mission to another person’s mold. Be you! You have a unique task—a divine purpose—that God has placed inside of you. Your good works are good for you, because your good God designed them with you in mind. Don’t let someone else’s opinion keep you from keeping on.

Too often we’re so worried about *how* we’ll do something, that we never fully embrace God’s *why* for our lives. If you focus on your why, God will bring the pieces of the *how* together. Author John Maxwell captured it well when he said: “Once you find your *why*, you will be able to find your *way*... *Why* is your purpose. *Way* is your path.”⁶

Once you understand your why—those God-inspired good works that God prepared in advance for you to do—it will change how you approach life. It will frame what matters most in your life, and it will give you the answer to your question: *Am I doing what I was made to do?*

Good Works For The Greatest Glory

Knowing your purpose in life is good for you. Literally! According to researchers at Mount Sinai St. Luke’s and Mount Sinai Roosevelt, having

a high sense of purpose can be connected to a 23 percent reduction in death as well as a 19 percent reduced risk of heart attack, stroke, and other coronary events. ⁷Purpose is both proactive and preventative. But purpose goes much deeper than our physical well-being; it goes to the deepest part of our spiritual well-being.

Jesus demonstrated the connection between purpose and spiritual vitality in John 17 when he prayed, “I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). How did Jesus glorify his Father?

He fulfilled His good works.

He completed His assignment.

He finished His mission.

Not the people’s mission. Not the disciples’ mission. Not His earthly father’s mission, His momma’s mission, or His brother’s mission. Jesus did what His Father sent him to do. Then Jesus prayed, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). Jesus completed His good works, and then He passed the torch on to His disciples.

Here’s an important thought to consider: Is it possible that the greatest way *you* can glorify God is by fulfilling the purpose for which He created you? God’s purpose for you has several expressions to it: knowing Him, worship, growth, fellowship, and sharing Christ with others, just to name a few. Each expression is an important part of living out God’s purpose for your life. But Jesus’ statement in John 17 describes a unique slice of His purpose—the *good work* of redemption His Father sent Him to do. That’s how Jesus glorified His Father. Guess what! The same is true for you. You can glorify your Heavenly Father by completing your good works, too.

That single idea summons the deepest part of me to give my very best. It motivates me to seek out and fulfill the good works He prepared for me to do. I’m guessing it does for you, too. In fact, when you awaken your

purpose, you realize just how much God made you in His image. As an image-bearer, the *good* that God placed inside of you comes alive. Suddenly you recognize good gifts, abilities, skills and passions that have real value and significance.

Imagine the difference this discovery would make in each of your family members. Imagine the impact this discovery could have on children and teenagers in your local schools. Consider the long-term transformation this discovery would create for the poor in your community as they experience a

Doing your good works makes a difference around you; understanding your good works makes a difference inside of you.

profound sense of dignity, worth, and value. *Doing* your good works makes a difference *around* you; *understanding* your good works makes a difference *inside* of you.

Fulfilling your purpose in life is much more than a checkmark on a long to do list. It's much more than a good idea or a noble cause. God's good works have eternal ramifications. They matter. A lot. It's worth the effort to gain clarity now, so you can celebrate later.

One Slice Of Your Purpose

We're about to embark on a journey together. I'm excited about what God is going to reveal to you, do inside of you, and accomplish through you as your purpose comes into focus. Before we dive into the practical side of this journey, I first need to make one clear distinction.

As I mentioned a moment ago, purpose is a broad subject with multiple expressions. Having a personal relationship with Jesus, connecting with other followers of Christ, growing to your full God-given potential, and sharing the message of hope found in Christ, are all different aspects of God's purpose for your life. In fact, without these expressions of purpose, your life will be incomplete. The roots of your purpose are found first and foremost

in a relationship with Christ. As Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV).

There is, however, another slice to your purpose in life—the *good works* slice. That’s what I’ve chosen to focus on in this book. *Good works is the specific mission God has called you to do.* In the pages that follow, we’re going to uncover those good works—the unique assignment—God has called you to complete. Being in relationship with Jesus is the *be* side of your purpose. It’s who you are. Good works, on the other hand, is the *do* side of your purpose. It’s the task God designed you to fulfill. We are hard-wired by God to complete this task.

God created you with your destiny in mind. His purpose is at the heart of your existence. Those good works are found in the greater purpose of knowing Him and loving Him. He, not me, is at the heart of my good works.

In the next five chapters, we’ll explore practical steps to discovering your good works; and in the final section of the book I’ll show you how to live it out. At the end of each chapter, you’ll find an “insights and application” section that highlights key ideas from the chapter. Plus, you’ll be encouraged to turn to the “My Good Works Journal” at the back of the book to help you apply what you are learning. If you’re mentoring or coaching somebody through this journey—or working with a group of friends through this experience—the “My Good Works Journal” will also prove immensely helpful in your discussions. Don’t rush this process. Give it time. As you do, God’s mission will come into focus for your life.

Good works is the specific mission God has called you to do.

One final note: you’ve probably noticed that I’m using a number of terms interchangeably to mean the same thing—good works, purpose, mission, task, assignment, calling—there may be a few more along the way.

Again, *good works is the specific mission God has called you to do*. Now, let's discover yours.

Insights and Application

Insights to Remember

- When it comes to discovering the good works God created you to do, clarity, confidence, and understanding are always more important than urgency, quickness, and speed.
- Jesus had clarity and focus, which enabled him to complete his good works. So can you.
- The greatest way *you* can glorify God is by fulfilling the purpose for which He created you. Fulfilling your purpose in life is much more than a checkmark on your to do list. It's much more than a good idea or a noble cause. God's good works have eternal ramifications.
- Good works is the specific mission God has called you to do.

Your Next Step

Memorize Ephesians 2:10: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (NIV)

Part 2

Get Unstuck and Discover Your Purpose

CHAPTER 2

You Were Created **ON** Purpose

Several years ago I was on a flight from Atlanta to Chicago to speak at a leadership conference. We took off from Atlanta without any problem, and the flight was rather uneventful (the best kind)...until it was time to land. As we neared Chicago, the pilot came over the intercom and informed us that there were storms in the area. Because of their severity, the pilot would need to put the plane into a holding pattern until we were cleared to land.

For the next few minutes, we circled as we waited for clearance from air traffic control. After roughly fifteen minutes, the pilot came over the intercom again and informed us that the holding pattern had been extended. The storms were taking longer than anticipated to clear, and it just wasn't safe to land. Good call! So we kept circling.

After another 15 minutes, the pilot announced to the passengers,

“We still have not been cleared to land...” There were a few groans and impatient sighs from passengers who were anxious to reach their destination, but the remainder of the Pilot’s sentence was where things got interesting: “... and the plane is running out of fuel.” Those are not comforting words when your life is suspended several thousand feet above the earth in a 98,000 pound piece of metal.

The pilot continued, “We’re going to have to divert to Indianapolis where we will land, refuel, and then fly back to Chicago.” And so we made the diversion. We headed to Indianapolis, refueled as quickly as possible, and then flew back to our original destination: Chicago.

Airplanes aren’t the only places we experience holding patterns. A *holding pattern* describes how we feel when we ask, “Am I doing what I was made to do?” Our search for meaning and purpose feels like we’re flying in endless circles, waiting for the storms of confusion to clear. Occasionally we get a glimpse of the sun, but only long enough to create more questions and frustrations. At the end of the day, we feel stuck.

Maybe that’s how you feel today. You’ve searched far and wide, and explored high and low, what to do with your life. You’ve turned over every rock, looked around every corner, only to end up where you started. If you’re like most people, you’re on the verge of a boiling point.

“God, do you have a purpose for me?”

“Does my life even matter to you?”

“Am I just an accident or an afterthought?”

Your quest to identify the good works God prepared for you to do can actually make you doubt the goodness of God. “If God has something good for me to do, why would He take so long to tell me? After all, it’s *good*, right? Why the holding pattern?”

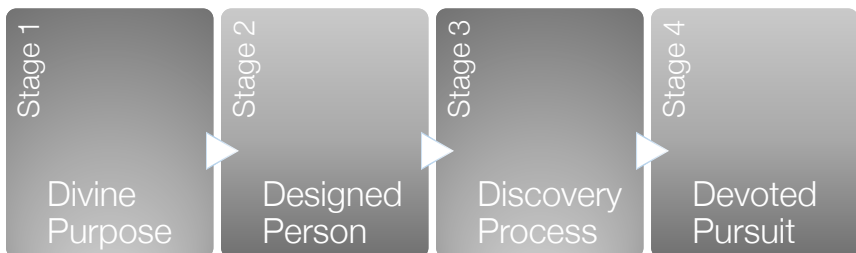
This book is going to provide you with the practical steps that you need to take in order to break out of the holding pattern, but before you can

stop flying in circles, you have to settle something once and for all at the core of your being. There's a certain myth that prevents countless people from ever discovering their good works. This myth is like a pair of shackles on the mind, making you believe a fallacy that will undermine your purpose more than anything else. It's the belief that God's not *for you*.

As our frustrations increase in the wait of the holding pattern, our faith that God actually has something good for us to do can dry up. We start to believe we don't matter, that God doesn't care about us, and that we are nothing more than an afterthought to God. Nothing could be further from the truth. The starting place to discover the good works God prepared for you to do is to believe that God *created* you ON purpose. Not by chance. Not in a fit of rage. Not because He was bored. Not on a bad day. ON purpose. The best way to drive this truth into your soul is to understand the four stages of the life purpose journey.

The Four Stages of Life Purpose

Discovering your good works rarely comes as an overnight revelation. There are usually plenty of questions and restless moments as you wonder what to do with your life. One thing that exacerbates the problem is our inability to recognize the various stages in the life purpose journey. From my observation, there are four distinct stages that describe this journey toward understanding our good works: *Divine Purpose*, *Designed Person*, *Discovery Process*, and *Devoted Pursuit*.



Stage One: Divine Purpose. Our journey began when God created each of us for a *Divine Purpose*. Again, I'm referring to this purpose as "good works" (how the apostle Paul described it in Ephesians 2:10). Remember, those good works were "prepared in advance for us to do." In God's wisdom, He created us with our purpose already in His mind. He defined "good works" for us *in advance*. In other words, God *started* with our purpose. Even if some of us were surprises (at least to our parents), none of us were accidents. Purpose preceded the creation of you.

Stage Two: Designed Person. Because God started with our divine purpose, he uniquely designed us to fulfill that purpose. Not only did God *create* us to do good works, but He also *equipped* us for those good works. That means that God deposited within us a unique design—our gifts, abilities, personality, passions, and more—to fulfill our God-given mission. (We'll talk more about that later.)

Stage Three: Discovery Process. The *Discovery Process* is where we encounter the holding pattern. It's that place of frustration where we try to figure out exactly what God wants us to do with our lives. This is usually a laborious process, filled with an endless search for answers, direction, and counsel from others. My goal is to help you get unstuck, and find answers in your discovery process, so you can move to the final stage.

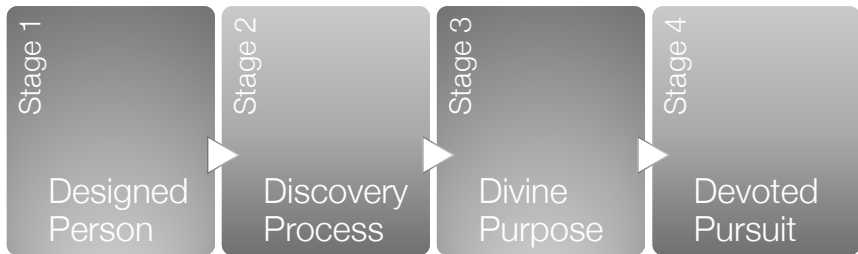
Stage Four: Devoted Pursuit. Once the discovery process yields long-awaited answers, you're faced with a question: "Now that I know my purpose, am I willing to pursue it with full devotion?" Stage four is where you want to be, but it's also where the rubber meets the road. You become accountable to act on what God has revealed to you.

I'm going to refer to the four stages again in chapter four, and specifically what to focus on when you're living in the discovery process. But my reason for sharing it with you now is to help you see just how intentional God was when He made you. Again, if you don't get this, nothing else I share

really matters.

Don't Rearrange the Boxes

The order of the four boxes above is really important, but it's not how most people think about their purpose in life. Too often we move the boxes around to fit our experiences, and to justify our misinformed view of God. When we're banging our head against the wall, it's easy to let our frustrations redefine our purpose. Instead of looking for our "why," we start asking God why He has forgotten us. Our waiting turns into whining. Our msearching leads to sulking. Our anticipation is replaced with apathy. So we reorder our understanding of purpose to look like this:



We say to ourselves, “Yep! God made me. He designed me years ago, and now here I am trying figure out why.” Then we point to God’s busy schedule and say, “I don’t know why God made me. I’m not sure what *good works* He designed me for. I guess one day God will come up with a purpose for my life when he’s not so busy.” Then, to make ourselves feel better, we top it off with, “But if he ever tells me, you can be sure I’ll pursue it (if I don’t run out of time first).”

This is our natural way of thinking, especially if our past is an unpleasant reminder of painful circumstances or poor decisions. But there’s one problem with this mixed up approach: it’s wrong. It’s born out of a misguided view of God. It makes us the beginning of our story rather than God. When you move the boxes to appease your frustration, it permanently upsets your

understanding of the good works God prepared for you to do. Let me explain!

It's easy to start the life purpose journey convinced that our *past* disqualifies our *purpose*. We say things like:

- “My parents never wanted me, and they reminded me of it every-day.”
- “Look at me. I’m not normal. I have this defect and that disease. God surely couldn’t use me.”
- “God doesn’t have a plan for my life. I was conceived because my mother was raped. I shouldn’t even be here.”
- “I’m the unwanted outcome of a ‘one-night stand.’ How could God love me, or use me, to do anything good?”
- “My parents abandoned me when I was a kid. I was nothing more than an inconvenience to their party lifestyle.”
- “I was the reason my parents ‘had’ to get married.”
- “I’ve made so many mistakes in my life that if God had a purpose for me, I’m sure it’s ruined by now.”

I’m not going to pretend to understand what you may have gone through in your earlier years. We live in a world where pain is unfathomable, and where justice is too far removed from the most horrific situations. So much of the pain we encounter today simply has no explanation to satisfy our questions, our hurts, or our confusion.

Because we have no answers, it’s easy—even natural—to rearrange the boxes. “God made me (I guess), and here I am trying to figure out why. But because of my screwed up past, he didn’t make me with any kind of purpose. Why would He? Maybe if things ever slow down, He’ll think of something for me to do. Until then, I guess I’ll just eke out an existence.”

While I can’t change your past, I do want you to know that the

original order of the boxes is still true. God started with your purpose and then designed you to fulfill it. Your past, no matter how ugly or unfair, doesn't abort your purpose. God created you on purpose, with purpose, and for a purpose. Look again at Ephesians 2:10:

“For we are God’s handiwork,
created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

“In advance” of what? In advance of *you*. That means your purpose preceded your past. Your purpose was established *before* you were conceived, *before* you were born, *before* you ever made a poor decision or picked a wrong path. If our purpose didn't precede us, then we'd find ourselves in a constant mode of performance, always trying to impress God and earn His love. We'd say things like, “Well, since I've messed up so bad, God doesn't love me any more. What's the use in trying to do good works?” Or, “Because my birth circumstances don't fit in a neatly packaged picture of perfection, I'm sure God gave up on me before I was even born.” It's simply not true. God hasn't given up on your good works, and he hasn't given up on you.

Your past, no matter how ugly or unfair, doesn't abort your purpose. God created you on purpose, with purpose, and for a purpose.

Worst Day, Best Day

Maybe you're looking at this conundrum from a different angle. You might be asking yourself, “How could God ever prepare good works for me to do when I'm not even good?” Well, join the club. We all fit that bill. Let's do a little experiment to prove it.

I want you to take a moment and think of the worst thing you've ever done. I know, I know! Way to ruin your day! Stay with me. What's the *worst* thing you've ever done?

Maybe you hurt someone really badly; you said something or did something, and they've never forgiven you. Maybe you've done something illegal, immoral, or unethical and you're holding your breath, just hoping nobody ever finds out. Maybe you've got a secret addiction, and it's eating you up on the inside, destroying every bit of your peace. These examples might even sound mild compared to what you've actually done. Go ahead, what's the *worst* thing you've ever done? Pick your *worst* day. Hold that thought.

Now let's turn to happier thoughts: What's the *best* thing you've ever done? Maybe you selflessly served someone without expecting anything in return. Maybe you've loved your family so faithfully, and you're really proud of the family you've raised. No, you're not perfect, but you realize you've done a pretty decent job. Or, maybe you've built a great company, or a great department, and the value you've added to the organization has earned you recognition, raises, and praises. Go ahead, what's the *best* thing you've ever done? Pick your *best* day.

Worst day!

Best day!

Now let me ask you a question.

On which day did God love you the most?

No matter what your past looks like—the good, the bad, the ugly—He loved you the same. Nothing you've ever done could make God stop loving you, and nothing you've ever done could make God love you more. Why? Because God's love isn't based on your performance. God doesn't define your life by your worst day. The apostle Paul said it like this: "And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that

is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

We’re not made right with God because of anything we say or do. None of us are good enough to meet God’s standard of good. Our performance gets an “F” compared to God’s righteousness. Instead, God has a different plan. Romans 3:22 describes God’s plan perfectly: “We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for *everyone* who believes, *no matter who we are*” (*emphasis added*). Everyone! No matter who we are. Baggage and all. That includes me. That includes you. All of us can

All of us can personally know God, not because of our performance, not by submitting our resume to God to see if we make the cut, but by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.

personally know God, not because of our performance, not by submitting our resume to God to see if we make the cut, but by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.

When we take that step—putting our faith in Christ—we align ourselves with the One who created us on purpose. Rather than searching for purpose in our own ideas and abilities, we align ourselves with our Heavenly Father who created us in Christ Jesus to do good works. You don’t need to rearrange the boxes. You matter to God! He has a purpose for you to fulfill.

You Were Created ON Purpose

Still not convinced? Maybe your past is *so* bad that you just can’t see how on earth God created you ON purpose. “Accident” seems like a better description. But it’s not. The dictionary defines an accident as, “an event that is not planned or intended: an event that occurs by chance.”⁸ I would say to you that despite your birth circumstances, you are not here “by chance.” Don’t let what *was not* planned by others define what *was* planned by God. You might have been a surprise to Mom and Dad, but you were no accident to God. Your parents might not have planned you, but your parents aren’t

God.

You might be on the other end of the spectrum. Maybe your parents planned to have you, or even prayed to conceive you for weeks, months, or years. But today, you feel inadequate, insufficient, or inferior. Something about you disheartens you. Something about your looks, personality, or life seems incomplete or undesirable.

No matter what kind of circumstance you find yourself in, before you can discover your purpose IN life, you must first be convinced that you are here ON purpose. Psalm 139 provides the most extraordinary picture of God's creative work before you and I were ever born. In this passage the psalmist describes God's detailed intentionality as He makes us.

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me! (Psalm 139:13-18)

A closer look at this passage reveals four beautiful and unique ways in which God created you. Each truth demolishes the lie that, "I'm only an accident." Consider this:

1. God Created You *Carefully*

Psalm 139 begins, "You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it" (v. 13-14). Accidents happen *carelessly*, not *carefully*.

Years ago, not long after I started dating Karen, we were both attending the same college. One day she was driving to school in her red, sporty Honda CRX, and I was right on her heels in my drop-dead-gorgeous, blue 1977 AMC Hornet. Yes, that was actually a car.

I'm pretty sure the color of blue they used to paint this car could glow in the dark. If it wasn't ugly enough to see in the daytime, it made sure you could see it at night, too. My dad found it at one of those government auctions. It was so cool that the letter "T" had fallen off the nameplate on the dashboard. I was driving an AMC "Horne." Need I say more?

So, I'm following Karen on the highway—way too close—when she suddenly hits her brakes. I rear-end Karen's car, push her into the car in front of her, and now her CRV looks like a Smart Fortwo.

What happened? I was following too close. I wasn't paying attention. I was being *careless* when I reshaped Karen's car.

That's not how God created you. He wasn't careless, not paying attention, as He shaped you together. He wasn't distracted by the busyness of the day, or sidetracked by an emergency taking place in the world. Instead, the psalmist says you were created delicately, marvelously, and with complexity. Such detail doesn't happen carelessly.

2. God Created You *Watchfully*

The psalmist continues in verse 15 and 16, "You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born..." Accidents happen *inattentively*, not *watchfully*.

You had God's attention when He was making you. Think of that. The God of the universe was watching you as He made you. Were wars and conflicts ravaging the earth when you were conceived? Were diseases decimating communities, or even entire regions of the world? Were natural disasters and devastating poverty stretching to the four corners of the earth

while you were being formed in your mother's womb? Yes, yes, and yes! And yet, God was still watching you, weaving you, forming you. You were not "out of sight, out of mind" with God. He wasn't distracted. In the darkness of the womb, the light of God's eye was on you. Nobody else saw you, but God did.

3. God Created You *Meaningfully*

In the second half of verse 16, the psalmist writes, "...Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed." Accidents happen *naively*, not *meaningfully*.

God knew your days before you did. He made you to fulfill a destiny. Again, you are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for you to do (Eph. 2:10). Because God prepared something for you to do before you were even born, that tells me that you were made *meaningfully*. God recorded each day before you lived a single one of them.

4. God Created You *Thoughtfully*

The psalmist concludes this extraordinary passage with verses 17-18: "How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!" Accidents happen *thoughtlessly*, not *thoughtfully*.

God was thinking about you with "precious thoughts" as He made you. In fact, (and this is mind-blowing) God's thoughts about you cannot even be numbered. His good thoughts about you number more than the grains of sand on every beach around the world.

Do you know how many grains of sand there are in the world? A group of researchers from the University of Hawaii asked that question. By their estimation (admittedly it's a very rough estimate), there are seven quintillion, five hundred quadrillion grains of sand on the beaches and deserts of

the world.⁹ That's 7.5 x 10 with 18 zeroes behind it. Imagine that! God had (at a minimum) over seven quintillion good thoughts about you before you ever drew your first breath.

You were created ON purpose. God created you carefully, watchfully, meaningfully, and

No matter how bad, how painful, or how difficult your past was, the only power it has to abort your future is the power you choose to give to it.

thoughtfully. He has good works for you to complete, and nobody can steal that from you. No matter how bad, how painful, or how difficult your past was, the only power it has to abort your future is the power you choose to give to it. Don't go there. Resist that lie. Believe what God believes about you.

Rebecca's Story

Rebecca Kiessling was adopted at birth, but like many adopted kids, she began to wonder about the story of her biological parents. After several failed attempts, Rebecca finally demanded that her parents tell her the name of the lawyer that handled her adoption. She was in middle school at the time, so Rebecca's parents gave her the information. Rebecca called the lawyer, and then discovered she'd have to wait until she was 18.

Rebecca didn't waste a minute after she turned 18. She contacted the caseworker and secured the case papers that she was so anxiously waiting to see. First, she read about her mother. It had all kinds of information about her mom: eye color, hair color, height, weight, age, ethnicity, educational level, religious background. Then she read about her father. All it said was that he was Caucasian and of large build. It sounded like a police description.

Fearing the worst, Rebecca looked at her caseworker and said, "Was my mom raped?" "Yes," the caseworker said. "I didn't want to tell you." Rebecca was devastated. She felt alone and unwanted as the news sank into

every crevice of her mind. She began to wonder if anybody would ever love her. Rebecca could have forced herself to move on, to pull herself up by her bootstraps and pretend she never knew the horrific circumstances behind her birth. But how do you ignore something so brutal, so defining, so shocking? Instead, Rebecca was determined to meet her birth mother, and at the age of 19 she called her biological mom.

Rebecca's biological mom was sorry to hear that she had discovered the circumstances surrounding her birth. As they talked, her mom carefully filled in the gaps. Rebecca was conceived out of a brutal rape at knife-point by a serial rapist. After the rape, the police referred her to a counselor, and the counselor encouraged her to get an abortion. That conversation led to two failed attempts to abort Rebecca by back-alley abortionists. The conditions were deplorable, making her mom fear for her life.

Rebecca later responded to the conditions her mom experienced from the back-alley abortionists with these words: "I know there are an awful lot of people out there who would hear me describe those conditions and their response would just be a pitiful shake of the head in disgust: 'It's just so awful that your birthmother should have had to have gone through that in order to have been able to abort you!' Like that's compassionate?! I fully realize that they think they are being compassionate, but that's pretty cold-hearted from where I stand, don't you think? That is my life that they are so callously talking about and there is nothing compassionate about that position. My birthmother is okay—her life went on and in fact, she's doing great, but I would have been killed, my life would have been ended. I may not look the same as I did when I was four years old or four days old yet unborn in my mother's womb, but that was still undeniably me and I would have been killed through a brutal abortion."

Rebecca's conversation with her mom concluded with words that drove a knife through her fragile identity. She told Rebecca that she would

have aborted her if it had been legal. Rebecca's self-image cratered, and her life began to falter as incomprehensible feelings of rejection and despair began to fill her soul.

Rebecca was in law school at the time. On the outside, things looked great. She was excelling in academics and athletics, but on the inside Rebecca was falling apart. Her non-existent self-esteem caused her to settle in relationships. In her mind she was lucky if somebody, anybody, would even like her. But those relationships became abusive. One boyfriend from law school beat her so badly that he broke her jaw. She ended the relationship, and then she hit the lowest point in her life.

At that point of desperation, a friend invited Rebecca to church. As she sat in the service, the words of the song, "Amazing Grace," began to flow over the wounds, the pain, and the brokenness in Rebecca's heart. Tears began to flow as she was overwhelmed by the thought that God would show his grace to somebody like her. God's love was palpable, and something began to change in that very moment.

Over the coming months Rebecca began to learn about God's love and value for orphans. She discovered that God loved her so much that he adopted her into His family through the sacrificial love of Christ. Slowly, Rebecca began to believe that others could love her too. Eventually she met her husband, and both of her parents and her birth mom attended the wedding.

Today, Rebecca is a lawyer, author, pro-life speaker, and she and her husband have five children (two of whom are adopted). But it all started when Rebecca recognized the infinite value she has because of what Jesus did at the cross. Rebecca realized that she is not worthless; she is priceless. She said: "One of the greatest things I've learned is that the rapist is NOT my creator, as some people would have me believe. My value and identity are not established as a "product of rape," but as a child of God."¹⁰

You matter! Period. You matter not because of anything you've done

or accomplished. You matter not because of your resume, the family you were born into, or your network of highly influential movers and shakers. You matter because God made you and loves you. You matter because Jesus died for you. You matter to God no matter who else you matter to.

If you're reading this and you are fatherless or motherless, and you're wondering if God created you on purpose, remember Psalm 68:5-6: "Father to the fatherless, defender of widows— this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families..." Maybe your parents abandoned

You matter because God made you and loves you. You matter because Jesus died for you. You matter to God no matter who else you matter to.

you at a young age, and you're wondering if you have any purpose in life. If that's you, hear the words of Psalm 27:10: "Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close."

If you're adopted, and you're wondering if God has forgotten His purpose for your life, remember that God finds great pleasure in adoption, and without adoption, all of us would be lost. The apostle Paul said, "God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure" (Ephesians 1:5).

Your greatest fulfillment is found in a relationship... not a job, a goal, an ambition, or somebody else's stamp of approval. Only a relationship with your Creator will satisfy your deepest longing to matter. Your history does not change one bit God's desire to have a relationship with you. He loves you whether or not anybody else did, or ever does. And if you feel worthless or hopeless because of something you've done in your past, remember, God created you *carefully*, *watchfully*, *meaningfully*, and *thoughtfully*. He hasn't given up on your *good works* because He hasn't given up on *you*. You

were created ON purpose.

Insights and Application

Insights to Remember

- The starting place to discover the good works God prepared for you to do is to believe that God *created* you ON purpose. Not by chance. Not in a fit of rage. Not because He was bored. Not on a bad day. ON purpose.
- It's easy to start the life purpose journey convinced that our *past* disqualifies our *purpose*. But the truth is, your purpose preceded your past. Your purpose was established *before* you were conceived, *before* you were born, *before* you ever made a poor decision or picked a wrong path.
- God created you carefully, watchfully, meaningfully, and thoughtfully. He has good works for you to complete, and nobody can steal that from you. No matter how bad, how painful, or how difficult your past was, the only power it has to abort your future is the power you choose to give to it. Don't go there. Resist that lie. Believe what God believes about you.

Your Next Step

Choose to believe what God believes about you. Don't let the past rob you of your future. Take a few minutes to reflect on Ephesians 2:10, and let its truth heal your soul: *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* Now make it personal: *"For I am God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for ME to do."* Finally, I would challenge you to put your faith in Christ. Romans 3:22 says, "We are made right with God by placing our faith

in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.” Christ has done for you what nobody else can do. He made redemption possible. And you can be redeemed to your Heavenly Father by putting your faith in Christ. This sincere prayer of surrender is where a new journey can begin for you: “Dear Lord Jesus, I confess that I cannot save myself. My sin has broken my relationship with you. I need your forgiveness and redemption. Today, I confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and I place my faith in you. I repent of my sin, and choose to follow you from this day forward. Thank you for giving me eternal life. Thank you for creating me with my purpose in mind. In Jesus’ name, amen!”