

Make a difference

An imperfectly planned operation well executed is invaluable; a perfectly planned operation never executed worth nothing.

Knowing what you are made for means nothing if you don't do anything about it. A gun does no good in battle if it stays locked away. Each and every one of us was created to perform a function within the body of the church. Once you know what that is, you will never find true peace until you fill that role.

Week 8: Taking Your Place



Scripture for the Week

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Overview

Challenge Feedback

Ask who looked for areas in their life to take charge of. What battles are they facing which requires them to be a warrior, not a spectator?

Main Focus

It is important for us to know our purpose in life, but just as important for us to fulfill our purpose. Jonah was given instructions directly from God to prophesy against Nineveh. He ran, incurred God's wrath, and ended up in the belly of a whale. Once he refocused and carried out his purpose, the city of Nineveh repented and were saved.

God is very clear we are assured and should know we have a part to play in His grand design. When we aren't doing it, storms show up in our life.

Daily Topics

1. Why is purpose important?

The first step in finding purpose is knowing God. Without submitting to his rule, we can never be told why we are here.

2. The second step is maintain focus.

With all the worldly distractions in place, we can't rely on our own strength to maintain focus. We must rely on God and build strong relationships to reinforce what we know is from God.

3. Preparing

We should be in constant preparation for whatever God wants for us. Physical and mental preparation allow us to be able to seize opportunities when they arise.

4. Doing

Don't forget, we must act. A perfectly planned operation never executed is not worth a partially planned operation executed well. We must act in faith to what we are called to do, trust God has our back and will help in the execution of our partial plan.

5. Discernment

It is also important to listen to the Holy Spirit to learn what it is we are supposed to do. By learning who we are and how we were made, we gain insight into what God had in mind for us – the Holy Spirit will make it clear, just ask.

Discussion Questions

- What does it mean manhood isn't sought, but reveals?
 - Why do you think authentic manhood can only be approached in relationship with God?
 - What job, person, or activity has ever been able to promise to fill your every need?
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- What am I not doing that I should?
- What is preventing you from “doing”?

Take Aways

Knowing our purpose isn't enough, we need to fulfill it. Next week will give practical steps to doing just that.

The growth track can help, but don't wait, start acting now.

Leader Next Steps

Find out when the next Step 4 of the Growth Track is and announce it.

Talk to participants and find out where their interests are. Encourage them to take active steps to doing, not just thinking.

Challenge

Evaluate where you are in your walk with God and commit to taking the next step. Join a church, volunteer on Sundays, lead a group, wherever you are in your spiritual journey – take things up a notch.

Prayer

Lord, open wide our eyes, sensitize our soul, so we are aware of the holy desires in our heart. Reveal the desires you created in us. Breakdown the walls, lies, and distractions that prevent us from fulfilling the purpose you created us for.

Holy Spirit, prepare us so when the opportunity presents itself, we are ready. Let us be ready when the time comes and give us Your grace so we have the strength to see it through.

Jesus, as we open ourselves to Your will, give us discernment to know what it is You want. Quiet the noise and worldly distractions that compete for our attention and let us hear You clearly.

Amen

Week 8: Taking Your Place

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Scripture for the Week

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Day 1: Why is purpose important?

It's as important for us to fulfill as it is to know our purpose in life. Jonah was given instructions directly from God to prophesy against Nineveh. He ran, incurred God's wrath, and ended up in the belly of a whale. Once he refocused and carried out his purpose, Nineveh repented and was saved.

God is very clear we are assured and should know we have a part to play in His grand design. When we aren't doing our part, storms show up in our life. Pastor Chris Hodges related the story of an incident at a Greyhound track which illustrates this concept perfectly. Greyhounds are motivated to run around the track by a mechanical rabbit they chase. While watching a race, the rabbit broke. The result was the greyhounds did nothing but wonder about aimlessly.

Where there is no vision, the people perish. Where there is no revelation, there is no constraint. (Proverbs 29:18)

Remember last week when we read *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their [own] hearts to sexual impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves [abandoning them to the degrading power of sin], Because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever! (Romans 1:24-25 AMP)*

If there are no constraints the result is exchanging _____ for the _____.

Gordon Dalbey asks, "What if indeed **authentic manhood** can be approached only in the **relationship with the Father God**, who seeks in every man to fulfill the **purpose** for which He has created him? If so, true manhood is not something sought, but to be **revealed**, precisely as a man submits to the God who called him into being and in whom lies his ultimate destiny."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Healing the Masculine Soul p. 4

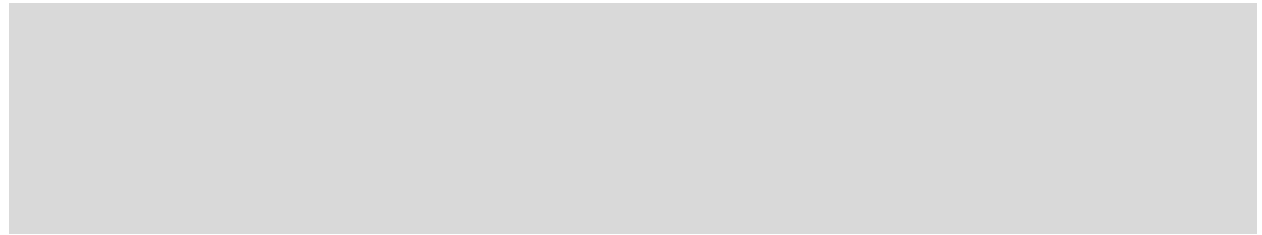
☞ *What does it mean manhood isn't sought, but reveals? Why do you think authentic manhood can only be approached in relationship with God?*

Eldridge expounds on this by simply saying, "Desire reveals design and design reveals destiny."⁶⁵

To combine all of this into one simple idea – to find purpose we must know God. Without submitting to his rule, we can never know why we are here. The world will not tell us our true purpose since it is counterproductive to the enemy for us to be secure through our God given masculinity because it gives us an inner strength that doesn't rely on being sold something. "If you are satisfied [by knowing God], you can't be manipulated to want what you don't have."⁶⁶

Look at the Ten Commandments: the first five are about our relationship with God, and three of the remaining five tell us to be satisfied with what we have – do not steal, do not commit adultery and do not covet your neighbor's wife. This is why the first week was focused on an identity defined by your relationship with God, not how the world tries to identify you.

Write Matthew 5:14-16

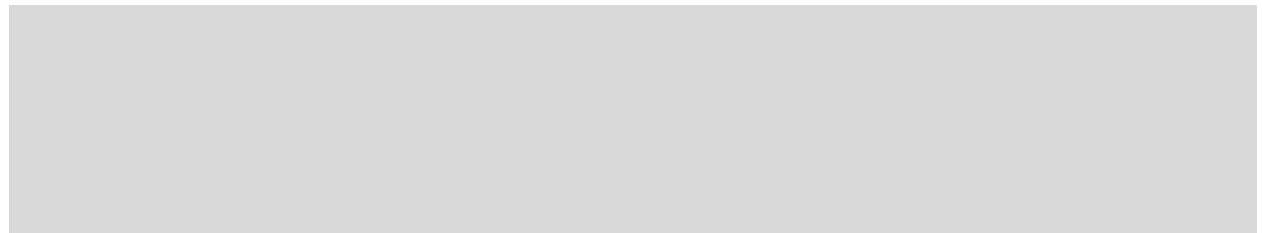


As we have discovered over the last several weeks, we live in turbulent times, both in the physical and spiritual. The powers of this world exert a strong influence over society and have covered the world in darkness.

Arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. (Isaiah 60:1-3)

As Christians, we must take our place and accept the purpose we were created for. Each and every one of us are ministers. You may not be on a stage or in the pulpit, but you are a minister ...

Write 1 Peter 2:9



... With a specific purpose ...

⁶⁵ Wild at Heart

⁶⁶ Healing the Masculine Soul p. 2

Write Ephesians 2:10

... At an opportune time ...

Write Ephesians 5:15-16

... To make an eternal difference.

Write 1 Corinthians 3:12-13

You are here, in this time and place with the experiences you have in order to bring glory to God.

Day 2: Focus

When finding purpose, we must focus. With all the worldly distractions in place, we can't rely on our own strength to maintain focus. We must rely on God and build strong relationships to reinforce what we know is from God. Paul address this in Corinthians a he explains the distractions marriage presents, *But the married man is anxious about worldly matters – how he may please his wife – And he is drawn into diverging directions [his interests are divided and he is distracted from his devotion to God] ... (I Corinthians 7:33-34 AMP)*



There are two crucial components of being focused:

Clear goals and motivation.

If there is no goal, there can't be a path. Without a path, we will wander. If we wander, we will end up doing things we shouldn't or doing too many things ineffectively. For us, the goal should be simple – know God. By pursuing Him and being in relationship with our Creator, our focus will become tighter and tighter, in essence, removing distractions form our sight. Don't be like the poor Spork – confused about your identity and without a clear goal, forever trying to be something you aren't.

James is blunt in his admonition, *You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an emery of God. (James4:4 AMP)*

Once a goal has been set, we need motivation to keep focused on the goal. There will be times when we feel down, encounter obstacles, feel abandoned, or temptations hit us hard. By having the proper motivation, we can minimize those times.

Ask Yourself: What motivates you in your walk with Christ?

There are two things which can truly motivate behavior in men – passion and fear. Scripture can help us understand these words in a godly context, then see how they cay can work together to motivate us to find purpose.

Passion

Read Revelation 2:2, and 4-5

Jesus is talking about losing our first love. What does this mean? Think back to your first love, the first crush that overwhelmed you emotionally – how silly you were and how wrapped up in the other person you became. That's what Jesus is talking about.

When we have passionate love, we lose ourselves to it and become so focused on the other person, we will do anything to please them.

Fear

Therefore, since we have these [great and wonderful] promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, completing holiness [living a consecrated life—a life set apart for God’s purpose] in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1 AMP)

Holiness is completed (matured) in the fear of God.

God is not a spirit of fear, so what does this mean? Let’s draw a picture to understand:

Electricity can kill. It is a dangerous and powerful force. We love it can do for us, but we must treat it with respect. As much benefit as this force can bring to our lives, when we forget to respect and take it for granted, it can hurt us. Sometimes it’s a mild shock – a reminder of what its nature is. Sometimes it comes in the form of a lightning bolt – and the consequences are devastating.

Unbridled fear of electricity can lead to dread and avoidance – an unhealthy fear. Understanding how electricity fits into your life and used properly creates a profound sense of respect.

Love without fear is passion without context. This unbridled passion could easily lead you to do things which aren’t pleasing to the object of your desire.

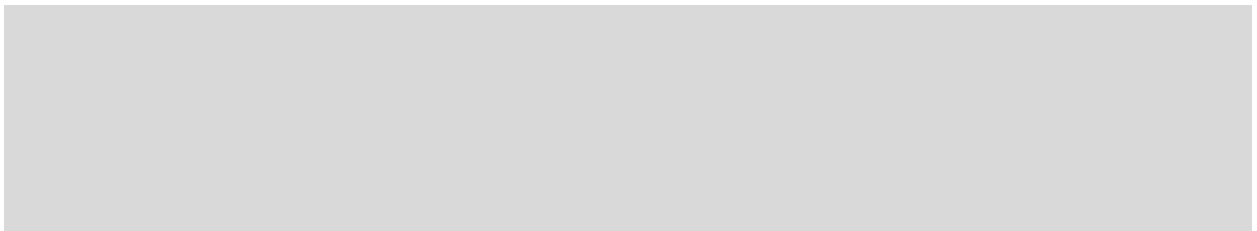
Ask Yourself: How many times have you done something for a loved what that wasn’t well received?

Fear without love is being scared and ashamed. Adam and Eve hid themselves because they were ashamed and afraid of what they did. God doesn’t want you to be ashamed, but he wants your fear – your deep respect. In a more intense context, God is the great I AM – therefore He is RESPECT, not just worthy or respect.

Remember, husbands are to love their wives, and wives are to love their husbands. They become one flesh, because we started as one flesh. The two attributes needed for motivation in finding our purpose are love and respect of God – because He is LOVE and RESEPCT.

Think about all the motivational posters and talks you’ve heard in your life. What do they promise? Success, money, fame? The common thread to all these ideas is to give energy so you can accomplish a goal. When we work hard for no discernable reason, it becomes difficult to continue on. So here is some motivation from scripture:

Write John 15:16



Now read Galatians 5:22-23 and write out the fruit of the Spirit:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Read Philippians 4:19. What will God do for you?

☞ *What job, person, or activity has ever been able to promise to fill your **every** need?*

Our motivation for fulfilling our purpose is so simple we often overlook the obvious – to fulfill our purpose we have to know Jesus, he wants to have a relationship with us so he can fill our every need! All we have to do is recognize Him as our Lord.

Day 3: Preparing

There are some things which will benefit us in preparing to follow Jesus. A bit of housecleaning in preparation for the new life ahead of us. Think of it this way, if you are deployed in hostile territory, there will come moments when immediate action is necessary. There is no time to get ready and move out. So a good soldier prepares ahead of time, remember last week we talked about training – readiness is a state of mind based on the act of being prepared. A soldier ensures his weapons are clean and serviceable, equipment is checked and easily accessible, and the soldier’s mental alertness is in keeping with the threat so the response time is quick. With this in mind, read Ephesians 5:8-18.

It is important to be ready when the time comes.
Don’t be the one who hears from God in the middle of the night to drive somewhere only to discover your gas tank is empty and the station is closed.

This means we need to be careful in how we live. It would be dreadful to waste an opportunity God gives you.

There are three questions we can ask ourselves regularly in order to keep us mentally prepared and focused:

What am I doing that I shouldn’t be doing?

Write Romans 12:2

If we are not conformed to the world, we are in effect the opposite of Romans 1:21 which would mean: Because we know and recognize Him as God, and honor and glorify Him as God and give Him thanks, we become fruitful and godly in our thinking and our minds are enlightened.

Ask yourself: Is there an area of your life the Holy Spirit is promoting you to let go?

Try giving it to God: “Father God, I have a confession to make. I have tried to own and control this area of my life _____. This has become a burden I can no longer bear. I ask you to take this from me. I relinquish the control I have tried to exercise over it, and submit to your authority over that area. In the Name of Lord Jesus Christ, I renounce, break, and loose myself from all bondage and ties this area has affected physically, spiritually, and emotionally. I thank you Lord, for setting me free.

What am I not doing that I should?

Dale Forehand say, “Your identity, your personal transformation, and even the assaults of Satan have all been part of God writing you story for such a time as this. The question for you is: Will you now use all of this to take your place?”⁶⁷

We have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we can talk directly to God. So with Jesus interceding on our behalf and the Holy Spirit translating for us, try asking the simple question: What am I not doing that I should? Be sincere and open yourself to the answer, you might be surprised at what you hear back. Use this space to write the answer.



⁶⁷ Often Told, Rarely Trained p. 162

Day 4: Doing

The final question is: **Why not do it today? James tells us, *But be doers of the Word [obey the message], and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves [into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth]. (James 1:22 AMP)***

Stop justifying the excuses, talking yourself out of action, and OBEY. It is important to notice something in this verse – by not doing, we betray ourselves. God’s will is going to be accomplished. His design will not be thwarted. If you don’t heed the call, it’s you who misses out.

We must act. *Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest (Ecclesiastes 11:4 NLT).* A perfectly planned operation never executed is not worth a partially planned operation executed well. We must act in faith to what we are called to do, trust God has your back and will help in the execution of your partial plan.

When Jesus told Peter and Andrew to, *come after Me [as disciples – letting Me be your guide], follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men,*” (Matthew 4:18 AMP) the Bible tells us they **immediately** left their nets. They didn’t ask what the compensation plan was, worry about how they were going to survive, or what the specifics of what they were going to do were. They simply followed Jesus in order to be closer to Him.

Proverbs 19:21 says, *Many are the _____ in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's _____ that prevails.*

☞ *What is preventing you from “doing”?*

I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. (Ezekiel 22:20)

Too many times, men will come together and talk about doing great things, come up with plans, leave, and do nothing about it. Why does this happen? Many times, once we are alone and start to think about how to change, we become afraid. We know we shouldn’t be afraid, but it happens anyway. Let’s address some common areas of fear:

Fear of the past. The enemy tells us we just aren’t good enough for God. In fact, we know this is true, but it doesn’t change God’s love for us. No one outside of Jesus was perfect. In fact, David, who loved God with all his heart and soul was an adulterer and murderer. That didn’t keep God from loving him and keeping His promises to David.

Write Romans 11:29

Fear of what others might think. Be more concerned about obeying God than looking foolish. Noah was told to build an Ark. Noah had cause to feel foolish while obeying God’s command, but he did it anyway. Hosea was told to marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her.

Write Proverbs 29:25

Blank writing area for Proverbs 29:25.

If God is telling you to do something, you would be wise to listen.

Fear of taking the first step. Sometimes, taking the first step feels like jumping out of an airplane. Remember, taking that step is an act of faith.



Write Hebrews 11:7

Blank writing area for Hebrews 11:7.

Fear of the future. Sometimes we let the fear of the unknown have control over our lives. Whether we succumb to analysis paralysis – thinking through so many details and trying to so perfectly plan nothing is ever accomplished or not taking the next step because we don't know exactly where it leads, we must have faith.

Write Genesis 9:13

Blank writing area for Genesis 9:13.

God is faithful and keeps His promises to us: ... *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)*

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples ... I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:8, 11)

God does not set us up for failure, He is trying to point us to success! It's up to us to listen.

Day 5: Discernment

Proverbs 25:2 says it is God's privilege to conceal things and our privilege to discover them. If you are like most men, you probably wish some things weren't quite so concealed.

The true man you are was designed by God. *[For it is He] Who delivered and saved us and called us with a calling in itself holy and leading to holiness [to a life of consecration, a vocation of holiness]; [He did it] not because of anything of merit that we have done, but because of and to further His own purpose and grace (unmerited favor) which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began [eternal ages ago]. (2 Timothy 1:9 AMP)*

"... a calling ... leading to holiness ... given ... before the world began"

Before the earth was formed, you were designed for a reason, a calling. The word calling is active, it is not a passive activity. Your design calls out to you.

Remember John Eldredge said, "Desire reveals design and design reveals destiny." We have all been given assignments as men in general, this is throughout the Bible, but your purpose is something which needs to be revealed.

The caution we must exercise is finding the godly desires in our heart, not the fleshly desires. The clues to discovering this can be found in your personality and the spiritual gifts you have. Different churches offer ways to help identify those traits, or if that option isn't available, speak your group leader for options in your area.

Once you know how you were made, it's time to pray. Really talk to the Holy Spirit. If you're new in faith, the first step might be volunteering at your church as a greeter, helping with coffee, or something which has an impact, but doesn't require "deep" knowledge. You may feel led to start a small group on your own (wouldn't this be an awesome curriculum?). It could be introducing people you work with to Jesus.

Understand this, a calling doesn't need to be a vocation as much as it needs to be a lifestyle. Yes, there are those who are called to devote their vocations to God, but there are others who can have an enormous impact on the Kingdom of God right in their own home or workplace. It doesn't matter if you muck stables or lead a multibillion dollar company, if you are fulfilling the purpose you were made for, you are fulfilled!

Ask Yourself: Have you felt drawn to something which could further God's Kingdom?

The secret is **listening** to the Holy Spirit. He will guide you – all you have to do is ask. When you think you have heard from God, but you aren't sure, the easiest way to determine if it is from God is to verify it against His Word. God will never tell you something that contradicts His own Word.

If the secret is listening, the challenge is recognizing what we hear. To ensure what we listen to is the Holy Spirit and not something else, there are seven tests we can apply:

Does it conform to the Word of God?

God does not contradict Himself. If you feel you are being led in a direction contrary to what is in the Bible – it's false.

Are you in a right relationship with God?

Discernment requires we be spirit led – which is why the connection with the Holy Spirit is so important. Being in a good relationship with God lets your spirit come alive and when the spirit is alive, the flesh is subdued. Read Romans 12 for pointers on how to get your relationship with God on correct footing.

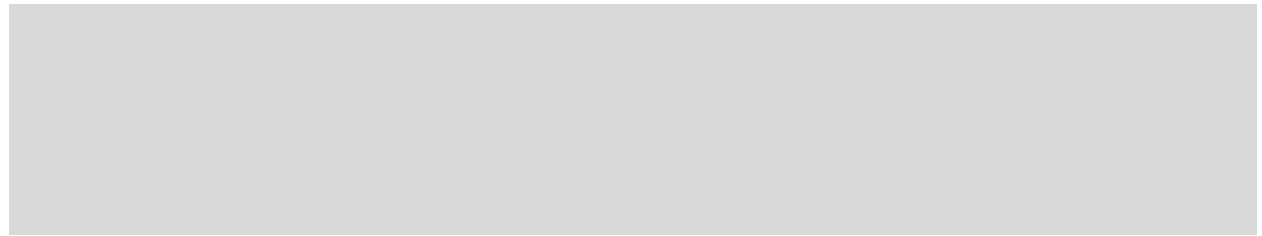
Will it make me more like Christ?

Read James 3. Is what you are hearing going to produce an attitude pleasing to our Lord?

Seek godly counsel.

It always helps to filter things through people you have good relationships with.

Write Proverbs 15:22



Next week we talk in depth about relationships. It is important we have friends and advisors we can turn to for counsel. Ones who also listen to God and will pray with you – not just for you.

Is it our responsibility?

This one is a bit tricky, because we may be called to areas which aren't exactly our "responsibility". The danger is discerning someone else calling when they aren't your responsibility, or when someone comes to you and announces a "need" for you when you aren't their responsibility.

Do you sense peace?

If there is no peace about what has been revealed, it probably isn't God. Always remember, God is not the author of confusion, it is not one of His names, rather it is Babylon whose name means Confusion.

If there is not a peace beyond all understanding, wait.

Is it my will, or God's will?

Discerning God's will is not a negotiation where we list what our wants are and pick from the list of available options based on that list. It's opening our heart to know what God's plan is.

We have a relationship with God, not a partnership. Never forget, He is King.

Take Aways

The first step to finding your purpose is by knowing God. Without submitting to his rule, we can never be told why we are here.

The second step is maintain focus. With all the worldly distractions in place, we can't rely on our own strength to maintain focus. We must rely on God and build strong relationships to reinforce what we know is from God.

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It is also important to listen to the Holy Spirit to learn what it is we are supposed to do. By learning who we are and how we were made, we gain insight into what God had in mind for us – the Holy Spirit will make it clear, just ask.

Next steps:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

God made us. We have experiences and testimony which can be shared with others. God makes all things good and useful to his will, so stop listening to the lie your past makes you unsuitable. It's time for us to step up as men, take our place as leaders in our homes, our churches, and our communities.

Challenge

Evaluate where you are in your walk with God and commit to taking the next step. Join a church, volunteer on Sundays, lead a group; wherever you are, take things up a notch.

Prayer

Lord, open wide our eyes, sensitize our soul, so we are aware of the holy desires in our heart. Reveal the desires you created in us. Breakdown the walls, lies, and distractions that prevent us from fulfilling the purpose you created us for.

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Jesus, as we open ourselves to Your will, give us discernment to know what it is You want. Quiet the noise and worldly distractions that compete for our attention and let us hear You clearly.

Amen

Journal – What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

A large, solid gray rectangular area intended for journaling or writing. It occupies the majority of the page below the question.
