

Chapter 1

HOW CAN I DISCOVER GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MY LIFE?



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So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 1:27-28 | The Bible, NIV

You and I are created by God not only to exist on this earth, but to make a difference. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, a heavenly perspective opens up to us that fundamentally changes our thinking. Suddenly, we no longer only live for ourselves, but begin to realize that God has a plan for our lives. And then one of the most important questions arises: "What is my calling?"

We are called to live as sons and daughters of God. But when it comes to our personal destiny, we recognize a divine principle: God first created the water, then the fish. First the land, then the trees. He prepared the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve found their place in it. This shows us that God first creates the space, the world - and then He puts us in the right place. There He equips us with gifts to enrich and make this world more beautiful.

You have been created to do great things with God!

Extraordinary things begin with a vision, i.e., an inner image or an idea of a possible future. This earth came into being through God's word. But before God spoke a word, He had a vision of what this world should be like: full of life, populated by humans and animals, cultivated, occupied, flourishing - and ruled by humans. Time and again, people have followed (divine) visions and left traces that we can still see today - just as God intended.

Moses, one of the great biblical heroes, saw how his oppressed people suffered and he was later commissioned by God to free them from slavery in Egypt. Despite Pharaoh's

stubbornness, years of turmoil in the desert, and many doubters, he stayed the course - and led his people to the border of the land that God had promised them.

Queen Esther, whose story can be found in the Bible in the book of the same name, risked her life to stand up to her husband on behalf of her people, the Jews - and thus became a heroine who prevented a planned genocide.

Jesus was prepared to suffer the terrible death on the cross because He knew what His mission here on earth was:

| *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*

| Luke 19:10 | The Bible, NIV

Johannes Gutenberg had a visionary idea: he invented the printing press and made books accessible to everyone. His first work, the Bible, brought God's Word to the world and changed history. With the printing press knowledge, education, and innovation spread throughout the world.

William Booth saw the misery on the streets of London. It moved his heart. Throughout his life, he campaigned for people who desperately needed help. He was a social pioneer and founded the Salvation Army. This gave rise to a worldwide movement that gives many people hope and new prospects.

Mother Teresa was moved by the plight of the poorest in Calcutta and began a mission of mercy that continues to inspire millions of people today.

To be able to follow God's purpose for your life, you need a vision. Because with a divine vision, you live bigger than yourself.

| *Where there is no vision, the people perish.*

| Proverbs 29:18a | The Bible, MEV

Without a vision, life lacks purpose and direction. Without divine vision, relationships deteriorate. Without making long-term plans, your health can be affected. Without financial vision, you just live from paycheck to paycheck. Faith without vision remains half-hearted, and work without vision becomes mere anticipation of the weekend. So, the question is: How can you discover your divine vision?

God has a purpose for you that you can follow

If you want to give your life direction and meaning, then start by asking God what He has planned for your life. He has created you wonderfully and knows you like no other. He will also show you how you can use what He has put in you for His good. The path there is not always as straightforward as we would like or imagine, but God safely leads us to our destination. Let us take a look at the story of Moses. (The whole story can be found in the Bible in the book of Exodus).

Moses, although born as a Hebrew slave, miraculously arrived at the court of the King of Egypt as a child and grew up like a prince in Pharaoh's palace. The injustice that befell his people did not go unnoticed by him. But his visionless passion led him to make a grave mistake. After slaying an Egyptian overseer, he was forced to flee into the desert, where he no longer lived as a prince but as a simple shepherd - far away from importance and influence. His passion had left him stranded in a Sea of Sand. But what looks to us like a dead end was no obstacle for God. Moses could not escape his destiny. God even found him in the middle of nowhere in the desert. He had chosen him for a great mission - the shepherd in the desert was to become the deliverer of an entire nation. God spoke to Moses through a burning bush and revealed this incredible mission to him:

"So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Exodus 3:10 | The Bible, NIV

God does not always speak as powerfully as He did to Moses through the burning bush. But He always speaks to those who allow themselves to be called and are ready to respond. You can be sure of that!

God has already placed everything you need in your hands

Moses hesitated, doubted, had many objections and questions. He was sure that he was not the right person for the job. God answered him with a counter-question:

Then the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied.

Exodus 4:2 | The Bible, NIV

Moses looked at his shepherd's staff. Nothing special, really. But God apparently wanted to use it for His plans.

The shepherd's staff symbolized Moses' entire being. It was his everyday tool. He used it to guide and lead the sheep and earn his living. And this staff was precisely what God wanted to use to do great things. When God asked him: "What do you have in your hand?", he also said: "You are the key! I want to use you as a living tool. Everything you need for this is already in your hands!"

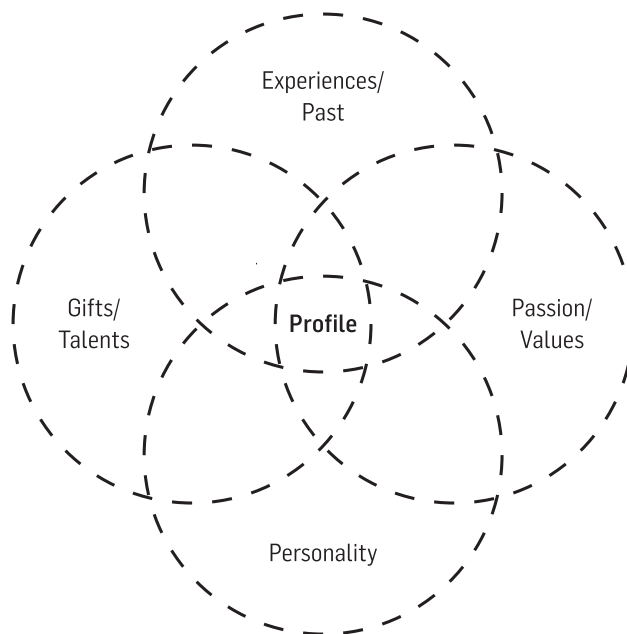
For you created me - my body and soul; you knit me together in my mother's womb. [...] My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body.

Psalms 139:13-16a | The Bible, NIV

Just like with Moses, God has placed something in your hands: Your unique divine profile!

This is how you discover God's purpose

Discovering our purpose is not always easy. But when we look at our experiences (our background, our story), our passions and values, our spiritual and natural gifts, as well as our personality, a profile emerges. This can show us the way and allow us to recognize what God has in mind for each of us.



In the following sections, we will look at the individual areas in more detail.

God uses your past and all your experiences

Moses' story made him the perfect man for God's plans. He was born into a dangerous time. Because Pharaoh was afraid that the Israelites would become too powerful, he wanted to have all male Hebrew babies drowned. However, thanks to his mother's cleverness, Moses was not murdered at the time, but was set adrift in a basket on the Nile.

When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

Acts 7:21-22 | The Bible, NIV

Moses was rescued from the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter and after spending his early childhood being raised by his own mother as his nanny, he grew up in Pharaoh's court. When he later fled from Egypt, he lived as a shepherd in the desert. There he became familiar with the conditions of the desert: the climate, the geographical conditions, and the challenges of moving from one place to another under these adverse circumstances. Each of these stages in his life prepared him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and through the desert.

Your past is an indication of how and what God wants to use you for. Look for the common thread in your past and all your experiences. These can be successes and victories. But often it is also the challenges or defeats that have shaped you in a particular way and formed your character, revealing who you really are. God can perform amazing miracles from our wounds, which we can share with other people and thus become a blessing. So, look at your past, hold out your hurts to God, and ask Him to show you how the challenging times you have been through can become a blessing to others.

— 99 ACTION STEP —

Write down some important experiences from your past that have shaped your life and could be important for your destiny. Is there a common thread in your past?

God uses your passions and values

Moses had grown up. Once he went to see his Israelite brothers being forced to do hard labor. In the process, he witnessed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, a man from his people! Moses looked around on all sides, and when he was sure that no one was watching him, he struck the Egyptian dead and buried him in the sand.

Exodus 2:11-12 | The Bible, NIV

Moses was overcome by holy anger when he saw his people suffering. And although he did not know how to deal with this passion at first, it was precisely this fire in him that God wanted to use to free His people from slavery.

Ask yourself this question: If money did not matter and you knew you would not fail, what would you do with the rest of your life? God has given you passions and values that are deeply rooted in your heart. Your passions show what your heart burns for, and your values determine where you set your priorities. Whether it is things that excite you or things that provoke a 'holy anger' in you, God uses all of these to give your life purpose.

– 99 ACTION STEP —————

Write down what your heart beats for. What do you get up in the middle of the night for? What awakens “holy anger” in you? What would you do if you had unlimited resources at your disposal?

God uses your talents and spiritual gifts

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Exodus 3:1 | The Bible, NIV

Moses received the best academic education of his time at Pharaoh's court. He then spent 40 years as a shepherd in Midian, where he got to know and master the harsh conditions of the desert. These two periods of his life were almost perfect preparation for his divine calling: to lead God's people out of Egypt through the desert into the promised land of Canaan. Moses possessed a pronounced gift of leadership. And although he did not consider himself a gifted speaker, his spiritual gifts enabled him to successfully fulfill his task.

God has also given you gifts and talents. These abilities in particular are part of your divine destiny. You have been given them to serve Him and your fellow human beings and to bring heaven to earth. If you are not so sure about what your gifts are, why not take the test at icf.ch/gabentest.

– 89 **ACTION STEP** _____

Write down: What are you good at? What do your closest friends see in you? What skills have you acquired easily? Do you perhaps already know your spiritual gifts?

God uses your personality

Every person is different: some are conscientious and organized, others are creative and spontaneous. Moses was probably more of a dominant, proactive type. This can be seen from his encounter with the Egyptian taskmaster, but also from the way he

later led the people of Israel. You may be loud and wear your heart on your sleeve, or you may be quiet and level-headed. The diversity with which God has created us is no coincidence. God has created your personality precisely so that you can live out your destiny in a unique way.

Let go, so you can really get going

Now you have become more aware of what is already in your hands. Moses was still looking at his shepherd's staff in amazement when God was already ready to demonstrate His power to him:

The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the Lord said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand.

Exodus 4:3-4 | The Bible, NIV

When Moses let go of his staff and grabbed the living serpent by the tail, everything changed. His staff was no longer called the "staff of Moses", but it became the "staff of God". What a transformation! An ordinary shepherd's staff became an instrument of the Almighty. It was with this staff that Moses later stood before Pharaoh, the most powerful man of his time, led the people of Israel out of Egypt, and caused water to flow from the rock. The staff of God in Moses' hand symbolizes the combination of the human profile and divine work - an unbeatable combination.

*So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took **the staff of God** in his hand.*

Exodus 4:20 | The Bible, NIV

When you walk in God's purpose, divine power and authority will fill you. Your gifts, passion, and personality will have a powerful impact. Surrender everything to Him, let go, and follow His leading.

Put aside objections and fears

Moses returned to the place where he had become a murderer. There were probably many objections and fears that could have prevented him from doing so. He had hurled some of them at God before setting out:

- Objection 1 I cannot speak well.
- Objection 2 I am too young.
- Objection 3 I am not the right person, pick someone else.
- Fear 1 They will kill me if I go to Egypt.
- Fear 2 What if this does not work?

You may also have objections or fears when you think about your vision statement. "What if God sends me to a country I do not want to go to?" "Will I be able to do that?" "I am not the right person..."

— 99 ACTION STEP —

Lay down your objections and fears in prayer with Jesus. Take courage, determination, and faith from Him.

Formulate your vision statement

Through the burning bush, God called Moses to follow His calling. The years of character school were now behind him, and it was time for Moses to use his personality, experiences, gifts, and passion to follow God's destiny for his life and make history with His help.

| *So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.*
Exodus 3:10 | The Bible, NIV

For you, this might be the moment when God reveals to you what He has destined you for. In the illustration above, you can see that your divine profile is the intersection of the four circles we have just covered. Now you can bring it all together and formulate a personal vision statement with God. Spend time with Him and let Him show you what He has already placed in your hands. He will speak to you.

Here are some examples of vision statements for inspiration:

- "Accompanying children and helping them become true and uncompromising followers of Jesus."
- "My vision is to develop the talents of my company's employees and to see how they can develop their God-given potential."
- "Living in freedom and leading others to freedom."
- "My vision is to equip key leaders for the local church to passionately love God, themselves, and people, and to plant churches."
- "My life should become more like Jesus Christ so that I can meet others with His moral and ethical values."

— 99 ACTION STEP —

Plan 1-2 hours that you can spend with God in peace and formulate your vision statement based on your profile. You can find a very helpful guide to creating your profile in the online appendix of this book (simply scan the QR code that appears throughout the book). This guide will take you through a step-by-step process of identifying your gifts, passions, personality, experiences, and values and expressing them in a vision statement.

My vision statement:

Note

During this time with God, it might be helpful to turn to the following Action Steps from the book "Experience God", if you have already done them:

"Experience God" - Chapter 4: My talents and spiritual gifts

"Experience God" - Chapter 11: My passions, values, personality and past

Further reading for your in-depth study

- **“Discover God”** - *Leo & Susanna Bigger - Book with videos* - Find answers to life's big questions. Discover that the living God knows you and wants to give you meaning and joy in life!
- **“Experience God”** - *Leo & Susanna Bigger - Book with videos* - Build a personal relationship with God, get to know Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and experience how God gives you freedom in all areas of your life.
- **“Hello Future”** - *Leo Bigger* – This book is about God's plan for each of us. And about the dreams that lie asleep within you and push out into real life. It is told through the biblical story of Moses.
- **“Eagle Eye”** - *Leo Bigger* - Hold on to your life vision and stay focused.

All books are available at: store.icf.church