

***The Story* of Purpose**

Finding Your WHY



The Story of Purpose (WHY)

The purpose driven leader lives a compelling and clear story with their lives. Your purpose helps you determine the type of story you want to tell, how you want to tell it, and who you want to tell it to. Crafting a clear purpose clarifies who you are, who you want to become, and where you are going. It gives an overarching narrative to the story we want to tell with our lives.

Purpose tells a story about two things: it provides meaning about who we are and it tells us where to go.

Purpose is the story you tell yourself over and over and over again. It is a story that is written down in your thoughts, but is confirmed through your daily habits and decisions. In short, you become the story you retell yourself each and every day.

Regardless of your skills or background, we are all storytellers. We all tell stories in different ways (some obvious and some non-obvious) with your beliefs, your standards, and your behaviors. We all have an internal dialogue running within our mind, 24/7/365, that tells you who you are, why you exist, what you should do, and how you should do it.

The way you think about yourself determines how you interpret the world, which then influences how you live. What you tell yourself about your reason for living, has a massive impact on the decisions you make. In other words,

“Our words shape our story and our story becomes the framework for our behaviors.” (James Kerr)

Your direction, your habits, and your interaction with others are the result of what you believe about yourself. We have an ongoing conversation with ourselves about who we are, where we are going, and what we are meant to do. Unfortunately, many of us don't take the time to think about what's going on in our own heads!



When you lack the intention to develop a clear story of purpose, you end up adopting whatever floats into your mind.

The purposeful leader understands the important role their *story* contributes to the clarity and direction of their leadership. Sadly, instead of being intentional about crafting a meaningful story (one that aligns with who you are and what you believe), many leaders let external forces shape the central narrative that defines their leadership.

In other words, the story of purpose must be intentionally crafted, it must to be built.

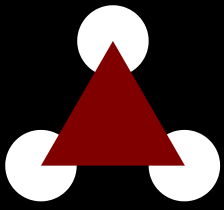
“Building purpose is not as simple as carving a mission statement in granite. It’s a never-ending process of trying, reflecting, failing, and above all, learning. High-purpose environments don’t descend from on high; they are dug out of the ground, over and over.” (Dan Coyle)

Without a clear purpose, you are like a ship without a rudder. You must take back the steering wheel of your life by becoming the architect of your purpose. You must do the hard work to carve out a meaningful life, a life of intentionality, purpose, and service to others.

Here’s the best way to start. The story of purpose is constructed by three fundamental questions:

- 1. What am I good at?**
- 2. Who am I serving?**
- 3. What does the world need from me?**

When you can answer these questions, you can begin to build a foundation of purpose.



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three fundamental questions:***

What am I good at?

Who am I serving?

What does the world need from me?



“At what points do my talents and deep gladness meet the world’s deep need?” (Frederick Buechner)

Question 1: What am I good at?

Each of us is equipped uniquely; there is no one else in the world that has your experiences, personality, and passions. You are specially positioned in specific ways to add value to others! Purposeful leaders don’t compare themselves to others, rather they focus on the unique and wonderful gifts they’ve been given.

Do the world a favor! Unleash the impact of your uniqueness on those around you!

We can all change the world when we intentionally use our abilities to impact others. Start by simply taking an inventory of your abilities and then leveraging those abilities for the good of someone else. Author Rick Warren wrote about the unique SHAPE that each of us is given. He said that, “the custom combination of capabilities is called your SHAPE”:

- (S) Spiritual gifts
- (H) Heart
- (A) Abilities
- (P) Personality
- (E) Experience.

You might be thinking, “well I’m not actually sure if I’m good at anything...”

Nonsense!

Everyone has something they are uniquely gifted to do. Here are a few ways to gain some insight into your specialness.



First, take some time for observation and reflection. Start by writing down a few items under each of the letters in the SHAPE acronym (also ask those who know you well for their opinion!). What comes naturally to you while others may struggle? What feels easy where others see a challenge? This will clue you into the activities that you are naturally wired for.

Second, make a concerted effort to put yourself in situations that will allow you to use your strengths. When you have the option to work in a certain area, choose something that intentionally aligns with your gifting.

Third, once you have a basic understanding of your gifting, make a habit of taking initiative in those areas. Find ways to “go first” in areas of your unique strengths - don’t be surprised at how much the habit of “going first” will open up doors that you never imagined.

Question 2: Who am I serving?

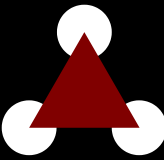
“What is my purpose”, is often the wrong question since it takes the focus off the *“who”* and puts the focus on *me*.

“What is my purpose?” is only half of the equation. It puts the focus squarely on you while minimizing the people that your purpose should be directed towards. The other question you should ask is “Who am I serving?” Purpose driven leaders routinely say NO to their own needs, by saying YES to the needs of others. Purposeful leadership finds ways to relieve someone else’s burden at the cost of your own comfort.

The point behind purpose is to become the means to an end for someone else. Said another way, help someone get what they need at the expense of what is convenient to you.



A Portrait of Purpose



Martin Luther King Jr. was a man of clear purpose, he understood that the story of his leadership would be determined by the strength of his resolve. He dedicated his life to a vision of America where “all men are created equal.” In the midst of persecution and grave danger to himself and his family, he remained true to his core belief that God had created all men equal in his sight. His goal was to change people’s perspectives on the racial injustices that plagued the country. As such, he staged nonviolent strikes, protests, and speeches. His determination was fueled by an unwavering purpose. In the end, his story would forever change the lives of millions of Americans.



The pursuit of purpose is always associated with a personal cost. Becoming a means to an end for someone else is painful (but always worth it!).

Put another way, the path to meaning (i.e. purpose) is found in the sacrifices you are willing to make and the responsibility you are willing to take. The path to meaning is found in the people you are willing to serve.

We get a great reminder of this every time we go to a funeral. The sobering reality of funerals is they teach us the true value of a life. When we look back, we tend not to celebrate the external accomplishments, but rather are reminded that the “success” of someone’s life is measured by the amount of it that was given away to others. The point of purpose is figuring out how you want to give your life away. The bottom line is, if you don’t have a plan to serve, then you don’t have a purpose. Andy Stanley said it well when he wrote that:

Purpose is always found just across the border from "what's in it for me?" Purpose is often found at the intersection between a stirred heart, opportunity, and skill. (Andy Stanley)

Commencement speakers often tell young graduates to follow their passion. "Be true to yourself, and this will lead to true happiness in life." Unfortunately, this vision of life begins (and ends) with the goal of making yourself happy, which neglects the important reality of living a life based on purpose.

Question 3: What does the world need from me?

Author David Brooks wrote these thought-provoking questions:

But people on the road to inner light do not find their vocations by asking, what do I want from life? They ask, what is life asking of me? How can I match my intrinsic talent with one of the world’s deep needs? (David Brooks)



Brooks is flipping the popular notion that our direction in life should primarily be determined by our desires. He is asking us to consider that a purposeful life might be founded on the virtue of commitment instead of self-discovery. He argues that finding our purpose in life will have less to do with *discovering your purpose* and more to do with *servicing a purpose*.

The recent popularity of the term *passion* has empowered a generation of people who are encouraged to pursue lofty ideals in the pursuit of their own interests. If we believe passion is primarily an emotion that guides our path, we run the risk of being left without clear direction. As our emotions change and shift (and they always do!), they can lead us down dangerous paths.

However, if we are looking for a clear direction that leads to true fulfillment, we should consider the dichotomy between passion and purpose. My argument is that we shouldn't pursue passion in life, but rather become passionate about pursuing purpose.

Purpose will ask us difficult questions that passion cannot. Purpose will ask us such things as:

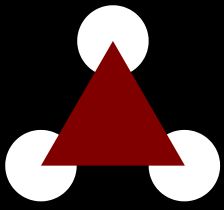
What is life asking of me?

What is required to live a life of purpose?

What is the responsibility that only I can bear?

What is the work that only I can do?

Who are the people that only I can serve?



"Purpose is always found just across the border from "what's in it for me?" Purpose is often found at the intersection between a stirred heart, opportunity, and skill."



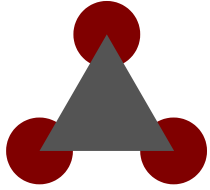
On the other side of these questions we find the answer to purpose.

Walking in purpose requires a level of humility and self-reflection that few leaders have. To understand our WHY we have to begin with our WHO. To identify and faithfully serve our WHO, we must be willing to give our lives away.

Part 1: The Story of Purpose - Summary

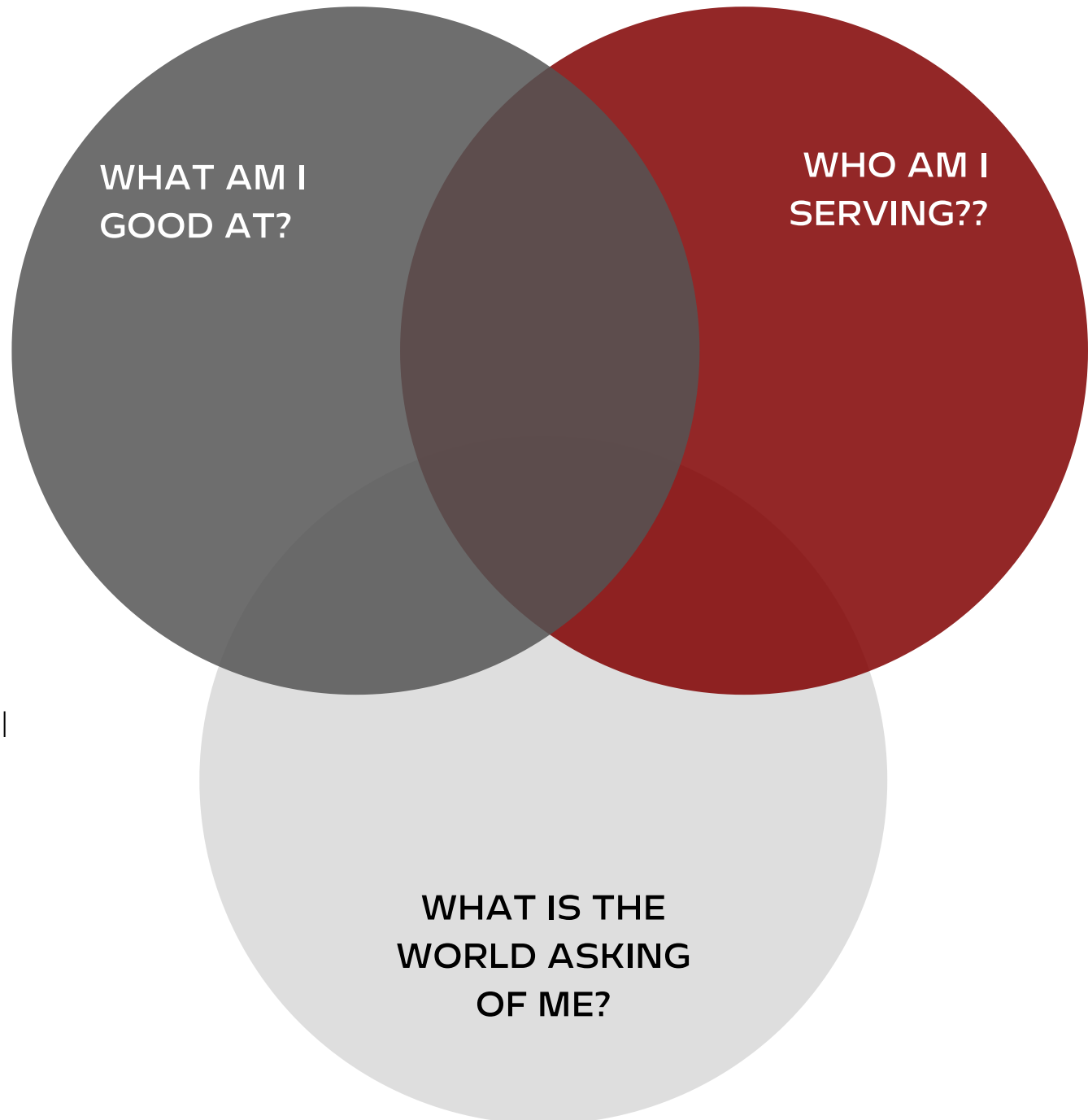
- Purpose is a story you tell with your life
- Purpose gives you meaning and direction (a mission and a compass)
- Purpose is found at the intersection of three questions:
 1. What am I good at?
 2. Who am I serving?
 3. What does the world need from me?

The Questions Of Purpose

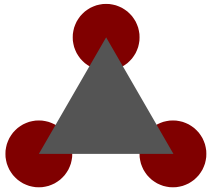


"Stories are how we think. They are how we make meaning of life. Call them schemas, scripts, cognitive maps, mental models, metaphors, or narratives. Stories are how we explain how things work, how we make decisions, how we just fire decisions, how we persuade others, how we understand our place in the world, create our identities, and define each social values."

- Pamela Rutledge



My Story of Purpose



Finding Your WHY

Write down your unique
Purpose here:

WHAT am I good
at?

WHO am I serving?

WHAT does the world need
from me?