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A LIFE-PURPOSE Michael B. Beough  
Acts 9:10-19 June 22, 2008  
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Today, I continue my series on our Bedrock Beliefs. I call these "unshakeable anchors" because these are the non-negotiable beliefs that keep us steady in the storms of life. We not only believe these things, but as a congregation and individuals we have experienced the truth of these statements.

Today, we are focusing on our fourth Bedrock Belief. "God has a purpose for each of us." And I find Acts 9 to be a great example of how God helps us find our purpose in life.

Have you ever asked yourself, "Why do I exist?" "What am I here for?"

In his book *The Man in the Mirror*, Patrick Morley tells about a call he received once from a man named Tom. Tom was 58 years old, one of Florida's most prominent attorneys, and crying when he called. Here was a man with a long string of stunning accomplishments. He had spent a lifetime moving up the ladder of success. He had also spent a lifetime as a good and faithful church member. The first thing he said to Patrick Morley that day was, "My life has no meaning—no purpose. It's as though I've been chasing the wind all these years."

Six months earlier, Tom had attended a prayer breakfast at the invitation of a friend. He thought God might have some answers for him. What he heard and saw in the men as they spoke of their personal relationship with Jesus Christ fascinated him. He envied their sense of peace and purpose. When he finally called Patrick Morley, crying, he said he wanted what those men had.

I have not run into too many men like Tom, men who openly admit the kind of emptiness he experienced. But every day, I pray for men like him who are running the rat race of life and losing.

Remember these words from Simon and Garfunkel?

*Like a rat in a maze, the path before me lies.  
And the pattern never alters, until the rat dies.*

In the book of Lamentations 3:40, God says to us, "Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord." Tom began living an examined life and took the steps to find the purpose he longed for.

Our Bedrock Belief speaks of a higher purpose for every person. A God-sized purpose. As a congregation, we celebrate this purpose. We thank God for it.

**Knowing this purpose helps us resist the dumbing down of our lives.**

The story in Acts 9 tells us how God stopped a man named Saul from dumbing down his life.

Someone said God converted Saul to be a follower of Jesus to keep Saul from wiping out all the first Christians. Saul thought that was the purpose of his life, to be an exterminator of Christians. He was good at it. He had the skills for it. But how dumb can you be about your life's purpose? His purpose came not from God. It came from the culture he lived in.

To stop Saul from dumbing down his life, Jesus appeared to him in a blinding vision as Saul was on his way to persecute more Christians. Jesus had a plan for Saul's life. Saul was the kind of man Jesus needed. In verse 15, the Lord says about Saul that he "is an instrument whom I have chosen."

And right here is the key to finding our purpose in life. We find it in Jesus Christ. God does not want us to waste our lives. So he sends Jesus to show us our purpose. He shows us what we are made for, and it's not to run the rat race.

Our Bedrock Belief says we are not going to live a whole lifetime dumbing down. We know that God has a purpose for each of us. A purpose as big as eternity. We are not going to dumb down our church. We know God has big plans for us. We are an instrument God has chosen to make a difference in the world. We refuse to think too small. And we are going to keep following Jesus because in him we find our purpose.

**One of the most exciting things about our Bedrock Belief is that it makes every day a potential life-altering adventure.**

You see, if you believe God has an eternal purpose written in heaven for every person, then you open yourself to all kinds of crazy possibilities. You never know when you might be the one God tags to help another person explode with purpose and energy. If you believe God has an eternal purpose for every person, you can never look at people in quite the same way again.

Ananias is one of my favorite Bible characters in this regard. About all we know about him is that he lived in Damascus, he was a disciple of Jesus who listened to God, and God used him to help Saul become a follower of Jesus. Can you imagine being the one who baptized the Apostle Paul?

At first Ananias wasn't so sure he wanted anything to do with Saul. Saul was an authorized assassin. But God can take even authorized assassins and bored housewives and rat racing men and give them a new vision that flips their lives upside down. There is no one off limits to what God can do through them. Ananias hesitates at first to help Saul. Fear is a natural response. Even questioning God is a smart thing to do. "God, are you sure you want me to go help this man named Saul? He has the power to arrest me and even torture me." But in the end it says in verse 17, "So Ananias went."

Talk about a leap of faith! Talk about an elevated pulse rate!

The adventure never ends. At Starbucks last week, I was lurking. A woman with four teenage girls came in, scooted some tables together next to me, and sat down. They were loud, back and forth, back and forth, trying to get their orders right. After an eternity, (after all I was there preparing for my sermon today), they got quiet, and then I realized why they were there. The woman was leading the girls in a conversation about what God had been doing in their lives the past week. The girls were serious and open and respectful and I could feel God in that place. When I got up to leave, I noticed the woman leading them was about the most ordinary looking person in the whole place. If I had seen her anywhere else without her Bible open in front of her, I never would have taken her for a spiritual mentor of high school girls. But God spoke to me and said, "I have chosen her to be my instrument." So she went. Because God has an eternal purpose for every one of us.

Our Bedrock Belief says we are going to go. And let me give you an opening line that I can only recommend because I haven't tried it yet. I think it could crack that glass ceiling that keeps us from helping people find God's eternal purpose for them. Next time you are with a friend, relative, co-worker, stranger on an airplane, say to that person: "As I listen to you, I am just trying to figure out God's purpose for your life." See what happens. It would make every day a potential life-altering adventure.

**I love this Bedrock Belief because it gives focus to our lives and to our spiritual eyes.**

Blindness is often a metaphor in the Bible for what is wrong with us. We can't see straight or clearly. Sometimes God has to make us blind so we can see again more clearly. Saul was blind from his vision of Jesus for three days. When Saul and Ananias learn that God has a purpose for Saul, it says in verse 18, "immediately something like scales fell from [Saul's] eyes, and his sight was restored." Then he got up and was baptized, ate something, and regained his strength. What a marvelous picture of what Jesus does for us!

Saul's life came into sharp focus. He never wondered another day of his life about his purpose. He spoke of having a peace that passes understanding. That is because his purpose came from God and focused his

life on Jesus Christ. In Philippians 1:21 he wrote, "For to me, living is Christ." In Philippians 3:14, he used a sports metaphor. He said, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

Our Bedrock Belief says we want to make an eternal difference. Whether we are CEO's or waiters in a restaurant, whether we are doctors or scrub nurses, whether we are physically fit or the prime example of the 90 pound weakling, whether we are the most popular kid on the block or the nerdiest nerd from nerdsville—no matter what we are doing with our lives, our focus is God's eternal purpose for us and the difference we can make that lasts for all eternity.

There is nothing more important than knowing God's purpose for our lives. As a congregation we are focused on helping one another discover that purpose and inviting others to join us in this journey. What we know for certain is that our purpose is found in Jesus Christ.

If you have not started this journey with him, I invite you to do that today. You can begin it by asking him into your life and giving him your heart and your will. We will then help you grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you once knew your eternal purpose, but have drifted away from the things of God, I have a deal for you. We have small groups in our church that can help you find the way again. If you are looking for the next step to take, please let me know or speak with any of our staff members. We want to do everything we can to help you claim your eternal purpose and begin living the life-altering adventure with Jesus.