

## John's story

By the standards of the world, John had it all: great career, lots of money, fancy cars, big house, beautiful wife, great kids. His business was flourishing, and he knew that his financial future was secure. John was known in the community as someone who worked hard, and who played equally hard.

As he got older, John felt that something was missing from his life. Although he had gone to church with his mother as a child, he hadn't been in years. He wondered if perhaps that was what he was missing: the Sunday morning ritual of going to church.

He started attending church, listening to the messages on the weekend. He didn't participate in any of the serving opportunities—he was just too busy. He told people around him that maybe he would volunteer when he retired. But not now.

One day, as he was leaving a coffee shop, John ran into a woman who asked him if he could give her some money. She told him she was homeless, with three small children. He gave her a few dollars and quickly walked away from her. He never saw her again, but her image stayed with him. He hadn't thought before about what it would be like to be homeless, and never considered how hard it would be to take care of children in that situation.

John started researching the plight of homeless families. He was appalled to learn that over 20% of all homeless people in Florida are children. He felt a burning desire to do something about it. He asked around, and began volunteering through the church with a ministry that focuses on breaking the cycle of homelessness. Eventually, John's passion for helping these people in need spread to his entire family, who joined with him in serving. John had found his purpose in life, and he was never the same.

*The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren was published in 2002. This book was used by churches and individuals across the country, and it launched a "Purpose Driven" industry, with 30 million copies sold in five years, multiple translations, journals, related group studies, and even a music album.

Our lives are so busy: work, family, friends, school. Technology, seemingly designed to make our load a little lighter, often serves instead to make us constantly accessible. It can be so easy to fall into the trap of doing, doing, doing. But *why* are we doing it all? Many of us are searching for the answer to this question. What is the purpose of our life?

If you were to search for the word "purpose" at an online book seller, a staggering number of titles would appear. The majority of those books claim that the author will share a method for finding your purpose in life. These authors have tapped into something we need: meaning.

Many scholars have researched the emotional impact of having a sense of purpose. One famous scholar, Viktor Frankl, was an Austrian neurologist who was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp during the Holocaust. Years after his release, he wrote a book about his experiences. In it, he wrote: "There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one's life."<sup>1</sup>

Your purpose in life is uniquely yours. An understanding of your life's purpose is deeply beneficial—emotionally and spiritually.<sup>2</sup> Frankl wrote: "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it."

<sup>1</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006, translation by Ilse Lauch).

<sup>2</sup> Carol D. Ryff, "Happiness Is Everything, or Is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-Being" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (1989, 57, 1069-1081).