

A large, leafless tree silhouette stands prominently in the center of the frame, its intricate branches reaching out against a bright, hazy sky. The sun is positioned behind the tree's trunk, creating a glowing effect. The background shows a calm body of water reflecting the light, with a distant shoreline visible under a soft, golden light.

# Purpose

Reflect on the word Purpose. Take a few moments to think, to hope and to pray about how God might create purpose in your life. How might your reflection shape you, change you and join you and Christ together? After you have taken a few minutes to reflect here, turn the page and read further.

# The Fifth Day of Lent

Monday, February 22, 2010

## Invocation

*From the point of Light within the Mind of God,  
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.*

*From the point of Love within the Heart of God,  
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.*

*From the center where the Will of God is known,  
Let purpose guide the wills of men.*

*Amen.*

*– Anonymous*

## Reflection

"You did it on purpose!" "Did not!" "Did too!" Ah, the sweet sound of siblings in the backseat of a car. Whether one crossed into no man's land, which exists in every family vehicle, or the other was engaged in creative sunflower seed spitting, the message was clear: Don't invade my space.

It is no surprise to any parent that children can be willful. It is, after all, part of the human condition. In fact, we carry that childish stubborn streak forward into adulthood, brandishing it whenever we feel someone is in our space. Even when that someone is God.

"God?" you may well ask. "Come on, what's God got to do with my everyday life?" Everything. When we know God, our lives have meaning; when we obey God, our lives have purpose. In Proverbs 16:9 we are told "A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."

*My cherished plans may go astray,  
My hopes may fade away;  
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead,  
For he doth know the way.*

*–A.M. Overton*

Like children, we may fret and fuss when things don't go our way. But God is patient with our stubbornness, for he knows His purpose will prevail and

we will come to Him through Jesus Christ. One day, we may even hear the question, "You did it on purpose?" To which we will joyfully answer, "Yes, God's purpose."

## Hymn

*What Will You Do with Jesus?*

*"A demon or the Holy Lord?  
Deluded fool or King adored?  
You've heard His claims.  
What have you done  
With Jesus Christ, God's only Son?"*

*They jeered and mocked Him as He died.  
They washed their hands or tried to hide.  
But here He stands!  
What have you done  
With Jesus Christ, God's only Son?"*

*Take My body,  
Take My blood poured out for you--  
Bread of heaven,  
Wine of life forever new!  
I come to you as loving Lord.  
I will not go or be ignored.  
I spread my arms.  
I reach to you.  
O hungry one, what will you do?"*

*– Words by Ken Bible*

## Benediction

*May you be enriched by your observance of Lent,  
and may God fill your heart and mind with  
wisdom, love and understanding. Amen.*

*Your reflections...*

## *The Sixth Day of Lent*

Tuesday, February 23, 2010

*"When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.' I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The Lord answered, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you.'"*

*– Acts 26:14-16*

If anyone in the Bible had a purpose set before him, it was Paul. And if anyone was a more unlikely pick, it was Paul. In fact, if asked, he probably would have said he was committed to stamping out this upstart Jesus sect. Then it happened. He was walking along on his way to Damascus to stomp on some more Christians when BAM! the Lord stopped him in his tracks. Paul and his companions were thrown to the ground by a blinding light. The next thing he knew he was talking with Jesus and agreeing to become a disciple and witness to His life and resurrection.

Jesus had a purpose for Paul, which the new apostle accepted into his heart and will. Could any of us do the same? Use this Lenten season to examine your heart and will as you prepare for Easter Sunday.

*Your reflections...*

## *The Seventh Day of Lent*

Wednesday, February 24, 2010

*"Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that He has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in Him."*

*–Ephesians 3:7-12*

In this letter, Paul reveals a divine mystery—through the Gospel, Gentiles along with Jews have become full heirs of God's blessings. As you can imagine, this didn't sit well with a lot of Jews. They were God's chosen people and Jesus was King of the Jews, the Messiah. In other words, he was theirs and quite a few in the early church were not too keen on sharing him. But Paul had received the gift of God's grace to preach to the Gentiles. It was God's purpose that Paul take the Gospel throughout the world and plant the seeds for an international church. This is according to the eternal purpose which God accomplished through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Your reflections...*

## The Eighth Day of Lent

Thursday, February 25, 2010

*"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose."*

– Romans 8:28

*"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

– Romans 8:35-39

"News alert: Is there friction between the New People of God? Jews and Gentiles are at odds over which group God loves most. Exclusive interview with the Apostle Paul right after this break. Stay tuned for his spin on this hot topic."

And so a tease might have gone if the first century had had the polarizing cable news shows of the 21st century. What they did have was a Christian grapevine that did a remarkable job of keeping everyone in the loop and, of course, that prolific letter writer, Paul. There were rumblings in the Roman churches that caused Paul to put pen to papyrus.

The churches in Rome were strong and counted both Jews and Gentiles as members but they were not generally at peace with one another. It was important to Paul's work to see the Christian church as a mutual fellowship of Jews and Gentiles joined in the one body of Christ as the new people of God. In the book of Romans, he stressed the interconnected roles Jews and Gentiles have had throughout history; and the fact that they must apply the Gospel to practical living. He also affirmed that salvation comes to Jews and Gentiles in the same way. Justification for all is through faith alone apart from works. Sanctification for all is through reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 8:28, Paul writes, "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." Use this Lenten season to strengthen your love of God.

*Your reflections...*

## The Ninth Day of Lent

Friday, February 26, 2010

*"Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."*

– 2 Timothy 1:9; 3:10-14; 4:18

In 2 Timothy, Paul was very much aware of his impending death. In this letter, written from a Roman prison, Paul offers encouragement to his friend in his ministry in Ephesus and his dealings with false teaching. We also gain insight into Paul's theological meditations on the grace of God, the faithfulness of Christ and the nature and function of Scripture. These were trying times for Paul. Most of his friends had left him to his fate—certain execution at the hands of Rome. However, his faith was unshakable. He was not afraid to suffer for the Gospel for he knew he had been faithful to Christ and that Christ would always remain faithful. Paul was confident that the One who had rescued him from death in the past would rescue him through death into eternal life. Paul had the courage of his convictions. As we prepare to celebrate the risen Christ, take a moment to examine your own convictions and your own courage.

*Your reflections...*

## *The Tenth Day of Lent*

Saturday, February 27, 2010

As we conclude this week's reflection on Purpose, consider ways to seek God's will in your life. Reflect upon:

Why should we seek God's will?  
Is your plan in keeping with God's Word?  
Are you doing this for yourself, or for God?  
Are you prepared to accept the doors God opens and closes as He desires?

Consider following scriptures as you seek God's will for your life:

*"I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;  
in the night also my heart instructs me.  
I keep the LORD always before me;  
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."*

– Psalm 16:7-8

*"But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you."*

– Acts 16:6

*"Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me."*

– John 6:37-38

Your reflections. . .

## *The Second Sunday of Lent*

February 28, 2010

### **Celebrating the Spiritual Disciplines:** *Prayer*

Richard Foster states in "Celebration of Discipline" that prayer is the most central of all of the Spiritual Disciplines because it ushers us into perpetual communion with God. It is through prayer that we strengthen our relationship with God, and as a result, prayer will transform us.

How do you define prayer? Are you open to the possibilities of God's healing, strengthening and directing power?

*This Lenten season  
Create in me...Harmony,  
Create in me...Purpose,  
And now bring me to Forgiveness  
That I may seek God's will  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

Your reflections...