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The A to Z guide to a purpose-driven life

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Editor's note: You may freely adapt this article for use in your congregation.

If you are looking to grow deeper spiritually in the coming months, try one of the following next steps!

You were Planned for God's Pleasure

Ask God to help you find purpose - You'll never find purpose until you've made the most important decision imaginable - make God the CEO of your life.

Breath Prayers - God wants us to connect with Him on a moment-by-moment basis. When we pray once a week or even once a day, we fail to take advantage of everything God has for us! Breath prayers are a great way to keep in contact with our Heavenly Father throughout our day. Just repeat short heart-felt prayers, such as "You are my God," "I love you Lord," and "Thank You, Jesus." Consult Chapter 10 of [*The Purpose-Driven Life*](#) for more information.

Commit it all to God - Your Heavenly Father wants every bit of your life, even the parts you don't want to give - *especially* the parts you don't want to give! Take a look at your life and find the areas you haven't really given over to Him. Make a commitment to surrender those areas now. Where do you start? Start with the one part of your life that came to your mind when you were asked to commit it all to God. **The area you least want to give**

up is the area He most wants you to give up. That may be your wallet, your children, your career - anything you're unwilling to give up. Do it today!

Devote your job to serving God - You weren't simply designed to worship God while in church; you were designed to worship Him around the clock. You worship with the day-to-day details of your life. You can worship God by giving your best at work, teaching a child to write his name, or sweeping a floor.

Express your worship by writing a prayer to God - Have you ever read an old love letter from your spouse? Writing is a great way to express your admiration for another person; it's also a good way to express your love for God. Try writing a prayer to God. Whether you imagine yourself a writer or not, the process of putting a prayer together will help you think through what you want to tell God about what He is doing in your life.

You were Formed for God's Family

Focus on the relationships in your life - By the year 2014, your key memories of 2004 probably won't be your successes or your failures, but instead they will be the people who are close to you. Don't let another year go by without making an intentional effort to focus on the relationships in your life.

Go deeper with a Christian friend - God never asked us to build a Rolodex of church friends ... He asked us to be a part of His family. He is more concerned with the depth of our relationships than the breadth. Make the commitment this year to go deeper in at least one of your same-sex Christian friendships. Maybe even ask a friend to be an accountability partner with you, so you can encourage one another to grow in your relationship with God.

Heal broken relationships - Determine today that you'll actively try to mend the relationships in your life that are broken. When Jesus was asked about the most important commandment, He connected loving God with loving others. Why? It's hard to

have a good relationship with God when we don't have peace with the people in our lives.

Institute a no-gossip rule for yourself and your family -

Nothing destroys a friendship like gossip. Make a commitment between you and anyone else you have influence over not to indulge in gossip. Don't spread hurtful information. For that matter, choose not to listen to gossip as well. Make a point to walk out of the room or confront the gossip.

Join a small group Bible study - God designed the church to be a family. If you're not building relationships with fellow believers, you're not fulfilling one of God's five purposes for your life – fellowship. You were never meant to live an isolated life. One of the best ways to establish relationships is by studying the Bible with a small group of friends.

You were Created to be Like Christ

Keep God's Word in your mind - Try to pick out a verse every week to memorize. You can begin with verses that focus around issues you're dealing with. For instance, if you're struggling with temptation, memorize 1 Corinthians 10:13. Struggling to forgive yourself for a past sin? Try Romans 8:1. Regardless of the verse you choose, you'll grow as you hide God's Word in your heart.

Laugh more this year - You might not realize it, but laughing can be considered a spiritual discipline. The Christian life was never meant to be a somber funeral but instead should be a joyous celebration. In the Sermon on the Mount, as Jesus is going through different characteristics of Kingdom living, He mentions laughter as the ultimate destiny for those grieving in this world (Luke 6:21). Jesus really resembled a lover of life more than a stoic religious zealot (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34). If you want to become like Christ, you'll need to learn to take God more seriously and yourself less seriously.

Make Bible study a constant habit - If the only time you open your Bible each week is when you show up at church on the

weekends or at your small group, you'll never become the Christ-like follower God wants you to become. The Bible teaches that you were created to be like Christ. An important step toward Christ-like-ness is absorbing the truth of His Word. Make Bible study as regular as brushing your teeth. *(We'll go out on limb and say that is a regular part of your life already! Ha!)*

"Nip temptation in the bud" - Temptation is one of the greatest spiritual killers out there. If you want to escape the snare of temptation, try letting a fellow Christian in on your struggle. If you have a [Celebrate Recovery](#) program in your church, that's a good place to start!

Open your heart to God's surgical maneuvers - When you become a follower of Christ, He starts a grand surgical procedure on you as He forms your heart into His image. Pain is often a sign that Jesus has His surgical knife on your heart. Although it might hurt for awhile, ultimately, it is a part of God shaping your heart. Take stock of the pain and trials in your life right now and allow God to use them to transform you.

You were SHAPE'd to Serve God

Pitch in and help out at church - Try volunteering at your church. It doesn't matter if you are a brand-new Christian or a seasoned believer, there is a place for you to serve somewhere at your church. Talk to the pastor or volunteer director at your church.

Question your beliefs about success - God's standard of success isn't the same as ours. Jesus tells us that the greatest in the Kingdom of God is the one who serves. Ask yourself, "How do I measure success?"

Reach out to a church member in need - You don't have to go across the ocean to find people in need. If you have a small group, be sensitive to ways you can help your fellow church members in real and practical ways. Maybe you can buy a group

member groceries, give her a ride to a doctor's appointment or just provide a shoulder to cry on.

Search for your God-given SHAPE - God has especially designed you to serve Him in ministry. He gives you unique spiritual gifts, heart (passion), abilities, personality and experiences that He expects you to use in ministry. Spend some time trying to discover your [SHAPE](#) this year and begin using that SHAPE in ministry! CLASS 301 and the SHAPE interview afterwards provide wonderful tools to start you on this process. Go [here](#) to get more information about bringing CLASS 301 to your church.

Test your SHAPE by getting involved in a ministry - You'll never know what ministry God SHAPE'd you for until you give it a try. Make the commitment to do that this year. You'll be able to tell quickly if it isn't for you. Then you can try something new! Eventually, you'll find a good fit.

You were Made for a Mission!

Understand God's global plan - Since the day Adam first sinned, God has been reconciling the world to Himself. Currently, God is working through people just like you to make Himself known in cultures across the globe. Does God want to use you to reach the nations? Pray about what your part will be in God's global plan.

Visit a neighbor with the intention of sharing Christ - Most of us have neighbors, friends or relatives who don't know Christ. Make a commitment to visit them and tell your story about what God has done in your life!

Write out your life message - Each of us have a special story about how God changed our life. Your story is unique to you. Take the time to write it out in 1, 3 and 5-minute versions. Then have the courage to share your story whenever God gives you an opportunity.

eXpress the Good News in your actions and words - We must learn to share our faith in Christ both verbally and in the way we live. One way is no more important than the other. Even though we might feel more comfortable sharing our faith in a particular manner, it doesn't excuse us from doing it the other way. Using words without actions will seem shallow. Using actions without words will seem timid. Make it a point to express your faith to one person a month in the coming year.

Yield your rights to help lead a person to Christ - If you only lead people to Christ on your terms, you aren't living up to your biblical responsibility. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul tells us that we must forfeit even what we consider rights so others might come to know Christ. Take a look at the list of people in your life that need a life-changing relationship with God. What will you have to give up to see them make that commitment?

Zzzz...zzzz...get some rest! - Worshipping, building relationships, growing spiritually, serving and sharing your faith requires a rested soul!

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