



CHRONIC JOY
chronic illness ministry



Writing a Biblical Purpose Statement

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What is purpose?

By definition, purpose encompasses our intentions and objectives. It's the reason something exists or was created, the reason we act or choose not to act.

Often when we think of purpose, we think in terms of employment, relationship status (daughter, son, friend, husband, wife, mother, father, neighbor), volunteer or service work, or contributions to society. And while those are good and valuable, they are only a partial definition.

For it is our biblical purpose that aligns us with God, revealing who we are and why we're here, why we were created.

Understanding our God-given purpose is a process that takes time and a little breathing space, more of an exploration than an exercise a shedding of our culturally defined purpose to reveal our eternal purpose.

There are no right or wrong answers, no comparisons and no rankings. Purpose is woven into the very fibers of your soul by the One with a plan and a purpose for every single part of His creation.

The following seven verses will help you begin to lay a scriptural foundation for purpose. Offer yourself the gift of unrushed, unhurried time this week to prayerfully work through the verses and answer the questions that follow.

Ecclesiastes 12:13b: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.



9. How would embracing these two commandments radically shift your understanding of purpose?

10. If we are truly called to no greater purpose than to love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and to love others as we love ourselves, what happens to our cultural definition of purpose?

11. **Matthew 5:44** again widens the scope and asks us to _____ our _____ and _____ for those who _____ us, further deepening and broadening our understanding of purpose, why we're here, why we were created.

12. **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** calls us to be _____ always, _____ continually; and give _____ in all circumstances.

How does that affect purpose, why we were created, why we're here?



13. **Micah 6:8** calls us “To _____ and to _____
_____ and to _____ with your God.”

14. Why might these specific actions (to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly) be important in defining your purpose?

15. What does it mean to *act justly*? To be just is to be fair. Are you fair in your daily interactions with people?

16. To be merciful is to show compassion or forgiveness to someone who has wronged you. How does *loving mercy* flesh out our biblical purpose?

17. Why do you think God specifically calls us to *love mercy* rather than calling us to act or walk or simply be merciful?



If we look at the specific actions listed in these seven passages, we can begin to build the framework for our own biblical Purpose Statements:

- ④ fear God
- ④ keep His commands
- ④ praise Him
- ④ love Him with all your heart, soul and mind
- ④ love others - neighbors and enemies
- ④ pray continually
- ④ be joyful
- ④ give thanks in all things
- ④ do everything to the glory of God

We live in a culture filled with voices suggesting we can have it all, do it all, be it all.

Discerning God's purpose for our lives with all these external influences can be challenging, yet often less difficult than our own internal struggles with shame, guilt and comparison. When we add the unique challenges of living with chronic illness, prioritizing becomes even more difficult.

Romans 12:2a says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Now Let's Throw Off Old Wineskins those discouraging, bullying, shame-heaping, guilt-laden voices we've lived with for too long.

It might help to identify where we're conforming to the patterns of this world.

1. List anything you feel guilt or shame for *not doing*.



5. Where do reading, writing, hobbies or other enjoyable activities rank as a priority in your life?

You might be thinking, "How can I possibly participate in enjoyable activities when I'm consumed with caring for myself or another with chronic illness?"

We want you to know, you are not alone. At times, we've been so weary it seemed impossible to do *anything* simply for the joy of it. Yet God encourages us to put our hope in Him, "who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment" (**1 Timothy 6:17b**)

Those words have been hard for me to read some days. Other days, they've made me angry, and sometimes, they've made me cry. But what I've learned over the last 16 years is that it's important to step away, even for just a moment - long enough to close my eyes and breathe, long enough to feel a cup of tea warming my hands, long enough to notice the silvery dust dancing through shadow and light, long enough to be still and remember that He is God. (Cindee)

Today, if you're in that place, start with just 30 seconds. Pause right where you are with this four-word prayer: "Lord, lead the way."

6. List any areas in which you feel guilt or shame that you aren't able to do enough (because of chronic illness or other factors) for the people in your life (family, friends, co-workers, etc.).



7. Think about the ways you currently connect with God through prayer, reading the Bible, through daily or weekly devotionals or Bible studies, in nature, through music, by journaling, etc. and list them here.

NOW, LET'S START OVER

Your Purpose Statement can be a bullet list of priorities or a single, more formal sentence. Ideally, it will be short and easy to remember, a unique description of who you are in Christ.

We all share the same goal to love and follow Jesus yet the way we each do that will look a little bit different.

STEP ONE

Take some time today to think beyond illness and its impact on your life — a little room to dream, something you may not have done for many months or for even many years. Give yourself permission to remember and also to hope, and when you're ready, begin to journal your answers to the following questions.

1. List all the things you care about.
2. List the things you love, your passions, things that make your heart sing.
3. What are you most interested in (e.g.: sports, history, gardening, crafts, the arts, literature, music, movies, travel, education, hobbies, etc.)?



4. List words and phrases that positively describe you (e.g.: teacher, gardener, reader, listener, encourager, visionary, compassionate, kind, understanding, generous, wise, discerning, etc.).

5. In what ways have you enjoyed serving, now or in the past?

6. What dream, hope, vision or mission has God planted in your heart? Don't edit or limit your dream because you think it's impossible. Write boldly, courageously whatever God has placed on your heart.

I once told my husband, "Dreams weren't meant for someone like me." I was in a dark place and had been for several years. Friends of mine were publishing books and speaking, hosting retreats and conferences, and I honestly believed it was safer to give up on my dream than continue to cradle hope's fading embers. But I was wrong. God had placed a dream in my heart. He had a plan and a purpose far greater than I ever dared to imagine. Deep breath, Warriors! In faith, courageously write your dream. (Cindee)

Remember that your Purpose Statement will likely transform as you continue to grow in Christ and your understanding of His purpose for your life. This isn't meant to be a static statement, but a starting point, a place to dip your oar in the current of God's greater plan for your life.



STEP TWO

1. Now reread your answers in STEP ONE. Circle or highlight the most important word or phrase to you in each question and list those word or phrases here.
2. Begin to work with your list. Prioritize, categorize, combine or group your ideas. Play with the words and phrases and begin to structure them into bullet points or sentences.
3. Over the next few weeks, work toward a simple list of bullet points or a single sentence and write it here.
4. Let's look again at the biblical framework for purpose:
 - Ⓞ fear God
 - Ⓞ keep His commands
 - Ⓞ praise Him
 - Ⓞ love Him with all your heart, soul and mind
 - Ⓞ love others - neighbors and enemies
 - Ⓞ pray continually
 - Ⓞ be joyful
 - Ⓞ give thanks
 - Ⓞ do everything to the glory of God



5. Is your Purpose Statement beginning to reflect who you are in Christ? Who He created you to be?

6. When your Purpose Statement is complete, write it here.

Consider writing your Purpose Statement on a notecard and taping it to your bathroom mirror or writing it on an index card and tucking it in the front cover of your Bible. If you're crafty, print it on a bookmark or place it in a frame and display it where you will see it often.



Now that you've written your Purpose Statement, we thought you'd enjoy reading the statements of some of the people close to Chronic Joy Ministry.

I was created to hold hope, seek beauty, chase light and dance with words, because that is how I experience the presence of God and speak life to a broken, hurting world.

CINDEE SNIDER RE

Author and Co-Founder of Chronic Joy Ministry, Inc.

I believe that I was created to impact the world in unique ways that build community and serve others. To do so, I must take good care of me spiritually, physically, emotionally and mentally.

- *Spiritually: staying connected to my Heavenly Father through prayer and Scripture, and to a local body of believers*
- *Physically: following, to the best of my ability, the treatment plans my medical team and I have developed*
- *Emotionally: accepting that my limitations are not punishments, but a necessary part of the unique work God has given me to do. A nap or rest, for*



example, provides the necessary fuel to accomplish His plan. Perhaps it allows me to simply hear His still small voice for I am still.

- *Mentally: seeking therapy or support when needed to guide me through the challenges that living with chronic illness brings.*

PAMELA PIQUETTE

President and Co-Founder of Chronic Joy Ministry, Inc.

Ground myself in God's understanding, such that unconditional love flows through me.

RACHEL THIEL

Physical Therapist and Chronic Joy Ministry, Inc. Board Member

I am redeemed and strengthened by His grace - daily seeking to grow ever deeper in His love and called to share His hope, always.

GINA M. WEEKS

Feedback Teams for *Discovering Hope* and *Finding Purpose*

To love God with my whole heart, soul and mind. To love myself and others as God loves us all.

HEATHER MACLAREN JOHNSON

Clinical Psychologist and Chronic Joy Ministry, Inc. Board Member

At Jesus' birth, the three Kings presented Him with gifts that revealed His purpose. At our birth, the King of kings and the whole realm of the Trinity bestowed on us gifts that define our purpose. Some gifts are evident. Others await discovery. All are filled with promise. As I seek the will of the Giver and use my gifts for His Glory, He will reveal my full potential.

This is my prayer. This is my purpose. This is The Point.

(The Point - A Garden Message is the title of my book, the name God revealed to me and confirmed while I was working in the gardens of Zion Episcopal Church.)

MARY ELIZABETH CASEY

Feedback Teams for *Discovering Hope* and *Finding Purpose*

