

Years ago, when I first heard about "Purpose Driven Life" by Pastor Rick Warren, I was still a fairly new Christian. I remember how the very first chapter of the book impacted me so much. On Day 1, Pastor Rick slaps us in the face right from the start and tells us, "It's not about you." He goes on to say, "If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God." As a new Christian, I was blown away by his words. My whole life seemed to be all about me...About me feeling sorry for myself for the hand I had been dealt in life.

Then on Day 2, Pastor Rick made me question my embedded belief that I had no worth, and my life seemed so pointless.

*"Regardless of the circumstances of your birth or who your parents are, God had a plan in creating you. It doesn't matter whether your parents were good, bad, or indifferent. God knew that those two individuals possessed exactly the right genetic makeup to create the custom 'you' he had in mind. They had the DNA God wanted to make you."*

For as long as I can remember, I questioned the purpose of my existence. After reading this book, I actually considered that God did know me, the good and the bad, but loved me anyway because I was his. That was huge!

As happens with most of us, life continues to go on, along with the hills and valleys that always come. I was growing in my spiritual walk, but not without bumps and scars along the way. It is now decades later, and I decided I needed to revisit Pastor Warren's book once again. It opened my eyes before, so perhaps I would glean something new the second time around.

Pastor Rick doesn't disappoint. Having just re-read Purpose # 3, "You Were Created to Become Like Christ", somehow, the words written by Pastor Rick about one's character hit me in a completely new way. I'm much older, now on the other side of what I was facing so many years ago. Surely, I've gained some wisdom between that time and now. I love what these words from Day 22 say:

*"You are a work in progress. Your spiritual transformation in developing the character of Jesus will take the rest of your life, and even then, it won't be completed here on earth. It will only be finished when you get to heaven or when Jesus returns. At that point, whatever unfinished work on your character is left will be wrapped up."*

Pastor Rick goes on to say that "God is far more interested in building your character than he is anything else...You will take your character into eternity, not your career." After reading these words today, my time of being alone for what sometimes feels like an eternity, almost makes sense to me now. When I would reach a point of crying out and asking God, "Why"? I was sure that he had forgotten about me, and that I was really and truly on my own. For someone who has codependent tendencies, I can look back now and see how I've grown.

With so much time to think and reflect, I've learned to cope with the hard things by myself. Before, I always depended on someone to be there for me to lean on. I needed someone to lean on. God placed me in a circumstance where the only place I had to turn was to him. I couldn't see that before, but I'm beginning to. He's definitely working on my character. As Pastor Rick says, however, my transformation won't be complete until it's time to go home, one way or another.

In my solitude, I've learned so much by watching other people and studying what makes them tick. There are those who still haven't received the memo about what is most important to God. People strive to achieve success in life through furthering their education or trying to climb that corporate ladder. There's nothing wrong with wanting to do your best, but if your aspirations become more important to you than your Creator, you are worshiping the wrong god.

Slowly but surely, I'm one day closer to peace than I was before. What an amazing thing to be on the other side of God's purpose for the things we are destined to endure. I am in awe of my precious Father. He really does love me, and he cares about who I am becoming. He is preparing me for the day I will see him face to face. I will keep on trying, my dear Lord. I will keep on trying.

Blessings,

Lisa Jo