

11

SUCCESS AND PURPOSE



PREPARATION

- Read Chapter 9 “Spiritual Renewal” from the book “God at Work” by Ken Costa
- Read the book: “Know Your Why” , by Ken Costa
www.godatwork.org.uk/books/know-your-why

OBJECTIVE

- Learn to see things through God’s eyes
- Learn about the meaning of success and purpose
- Obtain insight into the purpose of our lives
- Learn that success and purposeful living are not necessarily contradictions

WELCOME

PRAYER

STATEMENT

Finding meaning and purpose in life is, I believe, the greatest challenge of our time. This search is as essential to establishing lasting peace, sustainable economic activity and strong communities at ease with each other and any of the major challenges of climate change, elimination of extreme poverty or globalization. (Vincente Fox, former president of Mexico)

What are your thoughts on this statement?

Start a short discussion on this statement and ask two or three participants to briefly share their thoughts.

THE INTERACTIVE INTRODUCTION - PART 1

SUCCESS AS WELL AS A PURPOSEFUL LIFE

We spoke in Session 1 of the biblical meaning of work. We saw here that work was ‘invented’ by God: He Himself worked and gave humankind the opportunity to work too. Work is important, because it adds to our sense of self worth

and purposefulness. But we do not experience all the work that we do as purposeful; as something of value to our society and those around us. We need to realise that our work can contribute to general welfare and happiness of everyone in our society.

Many Christians struggle with the feeling that their work is of little consequence and look with jealousy at others who they believe do important work that contributes to society and the lives of others. Is this justifiable?

Besides our personal fulfilment and purpose, we need to remember that our work in itself is valuable too:

- Economic - (wealth and welfare)
- Financial - (caring for family and others)
- Personal - (experiencing fulfilment and purpose)
- Social and relational - (supporting others and developing relationships)

There are two words here that need to be understood within this context.

SUCCESS

In general, all people want to be successful in the work that they do. By 'success' we mean that a person delivers good work and their efforts bring them fulfilment. A sales manager feels successful and fulfilled when he/she closes a good deal and has finished a deal with yet another happy customer. A painter feels fulfilled when he/she has just finished painting a house and has delivered a good piece of skilled work. Others hear of these skills and the painter consequently gets new jobs. As a result of the good and skilled work that the painter performs, he/she becomes successful.

This relates to our behaviour and values in connection to our output. The painter confirms his/her ideas about painting in the work that he/she delivers. This sense of success is healthy and can be enjoyed.

Work can also give us confirmation of who we are. In the case of the painter, he/she feels good at being a painter. The confirmation is strengthened and the sense of personal success is increased, but the more the painter's identity is confirmed by his/her work, the less meaningful the work becomes.

The work loses purpose because the painter finds his/her identity in his/her painting skills, and not in God (see also Session 8 'Spiritual Renewal'). As a painter, he/she soon finds himself/herself on a downward slide.

PURPOSEFUL

There may come a time when these two professionals no longer find fulfilment in their work. They start to wonder what the purpose is of all their work. As a Christian too, you will want to be leading a purposeful life, contributing to society and the lives of others. When the sales manager and painter find no answer to questions on how to lead a life with purpose and how their work might fit into this, their work will most likely suffer. Those around them will start to notice: Although they still perform their work well, they have lost their fire and passion. In the end, this may affect their success, and they both risk going from being a successful person to someone who lives a life of averages.

Purpose has a lot to do with 'why you do something'; your mainspring and motives (see also Session 8 'Spiritual Renewal').

EXERCISE 11.1

1. Are you caring and successful in your work?
2. Do you feel that your current job has purpose? Could you say a bit more about this or give an example?

Share your answers in your small discussion groups after this introduction.

THE INTERACTIVE INTRODUCTION - PART 2

SUCCESS AND A PURPOSEFUL LIFE

This combination is possible when certain aspects in our lives are aligned.

1. If we heed God's calling and make it our objective.
2. If we believe that God has blessed us in this calling.
3. If we are open to the workings of His Spirit in our hearts and lives and aim to live as Jesus lived.

1. CALLING

Humanity's calling in relation to creation (Genesis 1:27-30 and 2:15-17)

"... they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created [humankind] in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:26-28)

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2:15)

We are God's stewards and witnesses. Our job is to take care of and protect creation. We need to live in God's image and be of service to His creation (humankind and the environment) and praise and worship God (also see Session 1 'Work Matters').

Moral calling, the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37–38; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. (Matthew 22:37–38)

Love and relationships are essential here. We can only give our work purpose if we adopt an attitude of love, passion, commitment and helpfulness towards others.

Service and helpfulness are the basis and the essence of the economy (see also what is said on this topic in Chapter 2 'Healthy Ambitions' and Chapter 8 'Spiritual Renewal').

Christian calling, the greatest commission (Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–18; Luke 24:46–49; John 20:20–23)

Our Christian calling is our specific Christian mission as followers of Jesus. The following quote might provide some inspiration on how we can fulfil this mission at our workplace:

Spread the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words (Francis of Assisi)

We can reach others, when necessary with words, through our lifestyles, our efforts, commitment and contributions to our ordinary work. We have no shame for the gospel, but we wish to show it as it truly is.

We need to realise that everything that we do will be projected onto God. We are witnesses for Him and His name. Jesus was the perfect witness for God and is therefore an example to us as human beings.

CALLINGS: A JOB OR LIFE STYLE?

The calling as described above has nothing to do with a certain position or job: It has everything to do with the way we lead our lives, regardless of our jobs or positions.

We do this by adopting a lifestyle that is to the glory of God and that is possible through the strength of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God wants to participate in our lives in all that we do, in our desires and our actions, and so we need to be open to His guidance.

SPECIAL AND UNIQUE CALLINGS

- The unique calling into a particular life mission, such as in the example of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4–10).
- The unique calling for a particular period of time, such as in the example of Gideon (Judges 6:14).

These callings are related to divine encounters and are personally requested by God. As outsiders we cannot intervene here. We can, however, observe and test.

It is important to realise that people are specifically equipped for such callings, but often only realise this in hindsight.

Moses was being equipped in the court for 40 years, trained in knowledge, insight and skills so that he could lead his people. He killed a person because of his passion for his people and their release from slavery. Next, Moses was shaped by the 40 years that he spent in the desert, learning about desert life. And it was here that God truly moulded his character. It was not until after all this that he received his calling, for which he no longer felt worthy or sufficiently skilled.. Both his experience in the court and in the desert was needed so that he could lead a tribe of people through the desert for 40 years and survive.

2. WE ARE BLESSED

We have been given the opportunity to live out our calling.

We are given access to God the Father through Jesus Christ and are blessed through Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit, God's power in the world. Only in this way, can we change into people who are the image of Jesus Christ. We need to realise that we have been created by God with a unique set of competencies and skills; with a unique character, desires and reason. We have been placed in unique positions with unique opportunities.

We have been placed in unique positions with unique opportunities

We live in a time where there is a new search for values and a purpose-led life. There is a surge in spiritual hunger, particularly among the 30 to 40 generation, and the institutional church has largely found itself unable to provide the necessary food. While there are so many changes and so much that people today are confronted with, there is a renewed spiritual hunger for life's true meaning. Here lies an opportunity for the church to speak uniquely to this need

by bringing these searching people in touch with Jesus, who said: 'I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10). Before us lies an amazing challenge to show people at our workplace, our colleagues, clients and other contacts that our faith is still relevant today.

Close observation of chief executives of global operations shows that they fail not because of a lack of vision, but for a lack of delivering results. Getting things done is one of the greatest requirements of success in modern business. This is also true of the church and Christians today. We know that we are the salt and the light of the world, we know that the fields are ready to be harvested, we know... so much, but when it comes down to the crunch, we do so little. We are busy playing church and patting ourselves on the back for being such good Christians, while there is a world around us that is lost and screaming for examples of authentic Christianity, for examples that encourage and motivate and create a desire in others to know Jesus, believe in Him and follow Him.

3. OPEN OUR HEARTS TO THE WORKING OF GOD'S SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit always refers to the one who sent Him, to our Lord Jesus Christ, who was humankind as it was intended. It is remarkable to see how Jesus looked at our world and how He reacted to what He saw.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." (Matthew 9:35-39).

Share stories about people in your own life regarding the points below.

We need to learn to see as Jesus saw

When Jesus saw the crowds, He saw people, individuals who were like sheep; sheep who had no shepherd. He saw people who were harassed and weary. He saw people as they really were, without masks of indifference and bravado. He saw right through them and saw how vulnerable and hurt they were. He saw that they were searching for a deeper meaning of life. The Bible describes these people as 'harassed and helpless.'

These words conjure up an image of a sheep that is on the run. The herd has suddenly been attacked by a wild animal, there is no shepherd around to protect them and this sheep is suddenly frightened and bolts. Right through the brush with sharp thorns that tear the fleece and wound the sheep. Now hold on to this image.

How many people around us do you think feel harassed by external circumstances; feel that they no longer live, but are being lived. How many people do we know who have been hurt by life and have no shepherd to tend to their wounds?

The word 'helpless' suggests 'without strength, weak, weary'. And let us be honest, is this not how so many people feel? People for whom every day is one too many and who cannot go on any longer, but still have to keep going because of their 'obligations'. People who deep down have had 'enough'. And who no longer want to lead a life without joy and happiness. These are not just elderly people who stand at the end of their lives, but more and more young people, who are asking themselves what they are doing it all for.

A feeling of futility: this is sometimes what elderly people feel who can no longer get around much on their own, people who for whatever reason are no longer capable of working, and even young people in the prime of their lives.

And if we look around us with this in mind, the thought that behind all those masks – the masks that we as humans wear almost daily – lies a whole world of pain and sorrow, then we have learned to see the world through Jesus' eyes.

We need to learn to feel as Jesus felt

'...compassion for them'

To Jesus, compassion means love in action. Think, for instance, of the 'Parable of the Good Samaritan', or the 'Parable of the Prodigal Son'. In both parables, compassion results in a bridge going out from the heart of the giver to the heart of the receiver.

When you read the gospel, you will notice that each time the compassion is mentioned in connection with Jesus, an action follows. We read, for example, that during one of His journeys Jesus arrives in Nain, where He encounters a funeral procession. A widow's only son has died. And when Jesus sees this broken woman and the practical consequences that this death has on her life – there is no one left to take care of her – He is moved by compassion and... raises the young man from the dead (Lucas 7:11-17).

We see the same thing when Jesus and His disciples move away from the crowds to find a solitary place to get some rest, and the crowd discovers where they are going. The crowd follows them, and some even arrive there before Jesus and the disciples, and are waiting there for them. And then we read that when Jesus steps out of the boat and sees the crowd, He is so moved by compassion that He starts teaching them. And the lesson is concluded with a practical example: This is when Jesus feeds the multitude, five thousand people (Mark 6).

What do we feel when we see people around us?

Sometimes we are moved, and other times we are not. We may not even care whether the people around us are lost without Jesus Christ. It does not keep us awake at night. We may even have started to believe the devil's lies that others would not be interested anyway, and that if they do need to find Jesus, surely they can do that without us, etc, etc.

Hudson Taylor, the 19th century China missionary, wrote the following to his mother when he was 20:

'I feel as if I could not live, if something is not done for China.'

We can pray and ask God to remove our stone hearts and teach us to see those around us as He sees them and to feel what He feels when He sees their needs.

We need to learn to pray as Jesus prayed

Verse 37 (Matthew 9) speaks about a harvest that is plentiful, but for which the workers are few. At that point in time it was Jesus on His own preaching the gospel. And then Jesus asks His disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send more workers. These same disciples ask Jesus elsewhere to teach them to pray. They ask this after they have seen Him pray; after they have seen how different His prayer life is to theirs.

Jesus sought out God's will in His prayers, not His own. 'Your will be done...' was more than just a pious sentence in His prayer. In this search for His Father's will, He is given an active role in the answer to His prayers.

The disciples pray for more workers and over time they are moved and a desire is stirred in them to become involved in gathering in the harvest. And when Jesus calls them and, after a brief training session, sends them out on their missions, they go willingly to do what the Lord asks of them.

Do we pray for workers to gather in the harvest, which today still is plentiful? And are we willing to be involved in providing the answer to our own prayer? In this regard, prayer is dangerous. If you pray for a specific cause, the chance is

big that God will call you to be involved and help accomplish this prayer. Think for instance of Nehemiah.

Another notable aspect in Jesus' prayer is that He believed in the power of the prayer. He was not saying: I will tell God the Father and just see what happens. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. No, Jesus believed in the power of prayer and calls His disciples to expect great things from God. We as churches in the secularised West need to rediscover the power of prayer.

We need to go as Jesus went

We read that Jesus passed all villages and cities, taught in the synagogues and preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. When He was in Capernaum and healed people there, everyone was happy and wanted Him to stay. But Jesus said: 'I must also go to the other villages, because I am also called to go to them'. He was not satisfied with what He had accomplished, but realised that there were more places in the world than just Capernaum.

And so He travelled through the land and preached the gospel despite the disappointments and ignorance. No, you are not the only one: Jesus also went through all that we go through. Think for instance of the following events:

- miracle of the loaves and fish
- rich young man
- entry into Jerusalem/crucifixion
- betrayal of Judas

But He knew that He was called by His heavenly Father, and because of this, the Bible tells us, He was obedient until the end, and thus became an example to us all.

We need to preach as Jesus preached

Jesus passed through all the cities and villages and preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. He did not only preach about how you could be saved for eternity. No, He spoke of the kingdom of God, the principles of which can be found in the Sermon of the Mount. He spoke of the kingdom of God, that one day will be fully visible here on earth, and where we, as Christians, can make ourselves seen as His hands and feet. We need to long for God's kingdom to become more visible. In the Lord's Prayer we pray: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come.... We are called to believe in God and from that relationship with Him we must pray:

Lord, let Your kingdom come, in my life, in my family, in the street where I live, in my work. May those around me see something of Your greatness, purity and sincerity.

May something of the power of Your kingdom be seen. May we already work together with You to see law and justice in our lives, especially in those places where we as Christians live and work.

BEARING WITNESS TO THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Determination, compassion and prayer are important issues when it comes to bearing witness in our communities. There is a real danger that we try to accomplish things through our own strength. We cannot change people's hearts, however hard we try. The only one who can do this is God's Spirit, who prepares the hearts and can use our actions and words to reach these hearts. And for this reason it is important that we allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit every day. The Bible refers to this as being 'filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18). So that He might work in us and through us.

SUCCESS AND PURPOSE ARE BOTH ESSENTIAL TO FINDING FULFILMENT IN OUR WORK

If you feel neither successful nor fulfilled at your work, you could consider the following possibilities:

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

You could adopt new vision and find new motivation and perspective in your current job. If passion for and a serving attitude towards your clients and colleagues gives you fulfilment, then this can add meaning and purpose to your work. This sometimes requires profound change and transformation in our hearts. But if you think that this is possible in your work situation, it is probably best to stay in your current job. God can use your work here as an example of how to live and give from an attitude of mercy.

ANOTHER JOB

Another option is to look for a different job, where you feel you can have a meaningful or more meaningful contribution. Or you could look for somewhere where, alongside your current job, you can find that sense of fulfilment.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Many volunteers do work that is in no way related to their paid jobs. A successful banker may work as a volunteer in pastoral care or as a soccer coach.

You could also devote some of your free time to a non-profit organisation, such as a sports club, food bank, elderly care or church. There are more than one million people involved in volunteer work with organisations that focus on helping people.

Share something from your own life. How have you found meaning and purpose in your work? And in what area do you experience this most?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION 11.2

- Discuss the topic further.
 - Share from your own life and what has touched you.
 - Use the questions to guide you.
1. Share your answers from exercise 11.1
 2. Share examples from your own life that witness to the power of the Holy Spirit, in which God's Spirit took over your efforts and turned them into something truly amazing.
 3. Am I focused on serving others?
 4. How could I serve others?
 5. What is needed for us to be able to show people in our workplace that faith is relevant in all aspects of life?
 6. Do others in my workplace notice this relevance in my life?
 7. How do I integrate the gospel into my work life?
 8. If there were no limits in my life, I would ...
 9. You can also continue with action plan 11.3 and discuss the questions together.

This is the last session. Pray for and bless each other.

CONCLUSION

- Thank everyone for their participation in the course
- Ask whether people are interested in follow-up sessions or meetings. (Churches and CBMC have various other ways of staying in touch. For more information, see the course organisers)
- Close with prayer and a last action plan, and pass on a blessing to everyone with the following words:

Go into the world, be fruitful in your work, know that Jesus has been given all the authority in heaven and on earth and that Jesus is with us all the days of our lives, to the very end of the age. The mercy of God, the love of Jesus Christ, the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit is with us, until Jesus returns.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE EACH DAY WITH PURPOSE?

God calls us to the work we are doing. He's interested not only in what we do but how we do it. Yet, finding purpose at work is one of the greatest challenges in our world today, and many of us struggle to live out our faith from Monday to Friday.

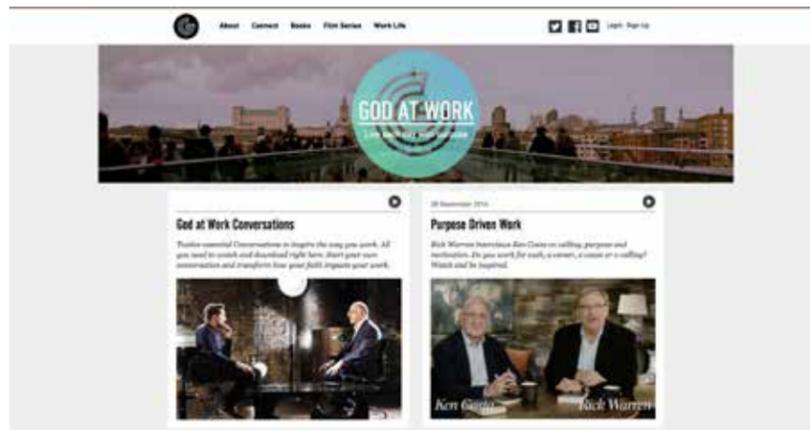
LIVE EACH DAY WITH PURPOSE

Wherever you are at, our passion is to encourage you to integrate your faith and work and to propel you to be an agent of the kingdom of God in your workplace.

Our practical and authentic resources are intended to equip you for your unique challenges and opportunities.

Learn from the expertise of many, including Ken Costa, the founder of God at Work, who has been working in Finance for over 40 years.

More about Ken Costa and God at Work: www.godatwork.org.uk/about



+EUROPARTNERS

EUROPARTNERS IS A MOVEMENT OF BUSINESS LEADERS AND (YOUNG) PROFESSIONALS WHO DESIRE TO HELP THEIR FRIENDS AND PEERS TO CONNECT TO JESUS CHRIST

OUR DREAM

It is our dream that all business leaders, -owners and (young) professionals accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Moreover, that they will reflect Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God in the way they behave, speak and do business, so that all people will honour and glorify God for who He is.

OUR STRATEGY

We mobilize and train Christian business leaders, -owners and (young) professionals to be an ambassador of Christ in their everyday life. We do this according to 2 Corinthians 5:20: "As Christian businesspeople we are marketplace ambassadors of Christ. God is making His appeal through us; to beg the world on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God."

OUR ACTIVITIES

- **Resources and training programs** to help businesspeople and (young) professionals grow spiritually and reflect the Kingdom in the way they do business.
- **An Annual Conference** where businesspeople, (young) professionals and ministry leaders can meet for friendship and encouragement. It is a place of inspiration, reflection and training.
- **The Young Professionals Academy** to equip and inspire young professionals to become a marketplace ambassador and a ministry leader in their nation. With mid-weeks or weekend meetings, trainings and a mentoring program.
- **Personal support and coaching** of business leaders and their teams on spiritual growth and achieving their goals in the best possible way.
- **CBMC training and support** to start a national CBMC ministry based on teams, prayer, leadership, evangelism and discipleship.
- **Event support** with a network of volunteers, professionals, speakers and businesspeople that can serve the various national ministries in outreach and in reaching businesspeople and (young) professionals in their nation.

TARGET GROUPS OF EUROPARTNERS

We focus on business leaders, business owners, (young) professionals and ministry leaders in business.

More information: www.europartners.org

Europartners is part of the CBMC movement





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