

Speaker : **Associate Pastor David Seah**
Title : **Staying In Tune**

Introduction

Recap: We can't re-live our lives. We have limited time. Therefore, there is an urgency to establish the purpose for our living. Our purpose can be seen in terms of an annual plan, short term (3-5 years) or long-term goal. If we don't have a clear sense of purpose, there can be a tendency for us to:

- Murmur & complain;
- yield to temptation & give up – our morality, our dignity, our worth, our future, our relationships, etc.

We ended our discussion by saying that we can find our purpose in God.

Last Sunday, we begin by saying that the overarching purpose for all believers is to grow in the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13) and to bear fruit (Gal 5: 22 – 23). And whatever we do, whether in **word** or **deed**, we are to do them in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col 3:17). That's the all-encompassing purpose for every believer.

But what is God's specific purpose for my life? In other words, what am I specifically called to do? How should I spend my time and utilize my talents & treasures? What career path should I take and how? What kind of relationships should I strengthen & how? What ministry should I get involved in? What are areas of priority that I should concentrate on and how? What's the bull's eye God has set for us?

So we looked at how God has wired us, and how he's still re-wiring us because of sin's effect on our lives.

Wire #1 - God uses our core values, the virtues we have, the character strengths, the healthy inclination that are already in us to accomplish His purpose.

Wire #2 - Our specific purpose often lies in the skills God allows us to develop. God may be asking us to use our already developed skills for His Kingdom.

Wire #3 – Experiences, especially the painful ones. God wants to re-wire and redeem them. So that we can comfort those in need with the comfort we received from God.

We ended by stating that:

- our values ripped apart from God, will cause us to be self-righteous and judgemental;
- If skills are developed and used apart from God, we become self-sufficient;
- Unpleasant experiences makes very little sense if God is not in the picture. We carry guilt, shame & condemnation and can never fully move forward to see our purpose realize.

Remember you saw the 3 wires or cables last week? One cable is the video, while the other two are stereo left & stereo right – which means there is visual and there is a balance of sound. In other words, we have a complete experience. Likewise, looking at our core values, skills & experiences give us quite a complete picture of God's specific purpose for our lives.

Jeremiah 29:11–13 says “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and you will find me when you seek me with all of your heart.”

We have been reading this passage for the 3rd time. While we know the meaning of the passage, not many know the context in which these words were spoken, much less the person who spoke it.

Jeremiah was a prophet raised by God during a time when God’s people were unfaithful to God’s laws and worshipped idols. He was called to proclaim judgement to God’s people and to declare that the nation of Israel would be faced with famine, would be invaded by their enemies, be plundered and be exiled to a foreign land.

Jeremiah’s ministry prompted naysayers to plot against him. Even the people from his hometown sought to kill him ([Jer.11](#)). In further attempts to counter Jeremiah’s proclamation of Jerusalem’s destruction, false prophets came to declare just the opposite of Jeremiah’s ministry. Jeremiah’s was wrongly accused, beaten and imprisoned. Yet he was focused on the purpose in which God has called him to, until he himself saw the destruction of Jerusalem in which he had prophesied years before.

BTW, it is interesting to see that Jeremiah’s life has great resemblance to what we have been talking about for the past 2 Sundays. Let me show you:

- His core value - religious and spiritual. He came from a family of priests (Jeremiah 1:1 - The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin)
- Wired by God from birth – God (Jeremiah 1: 5 - “Before I formed you in the womb I knew^[a] you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”)
- Equipped by God (Jeremiah 1: 9 - Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth.”)
- Called of God to fulfill a specific purpose (Jeremiah 1:10 - See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”). Jeremiah not only prophesied against Israel but other nations like Babylon, Assyria & Egypt.

This evening, in this last message in this 3 week series, let’s consider this:

- Ok, I found my purpose in God;
- I know my specific purpose by prayerfully look at my core values, skills and experiences
- Now, how can I ensure that God’s purpose for me be accomplished? How can I stay align? How can I stay in tune?

How can I stay in tune so that God will bring to pass His purpose for our marriage, our work, our studies, our ministry, our health, financial capability, etc?

But before we answer that question, take a look at this video of a philharmonic orchestra tuning their instruments and playing a symphony.

[Video of orchestra tuning & playing]

Content

The orchestra was tuning to an oboe - its sound penetrates easier to all players of the orchestra.

Every time they play, they need to tune. Regardless of how well or how experience you are you need to tune to the oboe.

1. God's Word

God's Word is our oboe of life. We tune our motivation, our life's direction, our action according to the standard of God's Word.

His word is in my heart like a fire, says Jeremiah in Jeremiah 20:9. It was God's Word that kept Jeremiah in line with God's will. Jeremiah has reasons to sway from God – circumstances was not favourable, he was not accepted by people, it is better to flow with the crowd, why rock the boat, why come against the powerful & the influential, etc.

But he did not. He kept God's Word, He kept speaking God's Word and writing down God's Word. There was an incident when the king burned God's Word thru Jeremiah – Jeremiah re-wrote it. And listen to what God said to the King:

Jer 36: 27 – 31 - After the king burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ²⁸ "Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first scroll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah burned up. ²⁹ Also tell Jehoiakim king of Judah, 'This is what the LORD says: You burned that scroll and said, "Why did you write on it that the king of Babylon would certainly come and destroy this land and wipe from it both man and beast?" ³⁰ Therefore this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night. ³¹ I will punish him and his children and his attendants for their wickedness; I will bring on them and those living in Jerusalem and the people of Judah every disaster I pronounced against them, because they have not listened.'"

Give God's Word the due respect by reading it, understanding it and applying it. How?

- Get a good translation
So that you understand. So that you get the meaning. Gain understanding. Have 'aha' moments.
- But in order that you get the most out of God's Word,

Get tools to help you. I highly recommend "How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth" a book every believer MUST read.

Why? Most times, the reason why we find the Bible boring or unhelpful is because we do not know how to 'read the Bible for what its' worth'. When we buy something we want to use it fully right? Its like - you buy iphone and only use 2 features – answer calls & text message. What? How can?

But we do that with God's Word.

The author says – “The first reason one needs to learn *how* to interpret is that, whether one likes it or not, every reader is at the same time an interpreter. That is, most of us assume as we read that we also understand what we read. We also tend to think that *our understanding* is the same thing as the Holy Spirit's or human author's *intent*. However, we invariably bring to the text all that we are, with all of our experiences, culture, and prior understandings of words and ideas. Sometimes what we bring to the text, unintentionally to be sure, leads us astray, or else causes us to read all kinds of foreign ideas into the text. (p. 14)”

- Immediately apply God's Word

What happens when we only hear but don't apply - Luke 6:48-49 - If you work the words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who dug deep and laid the foundation of his house on bedrock. When the river burst its banks and crashed against the house, nothing could shake it; it was built to last. But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a dumb carpenter who built a house but skipped the foundation. When the swollen river came crashing in, it collapsed like a house of cards. It was a total loss.

Our life constantly needs tuning. Oboe is in our hands.

Honestly ask yourself - do I look forward more to reading the newspaper/blog/FB than the Bible?
Start today – get a good translation, get the tool and apply God's Word. Moreover we have excellent Bible study avenues – SCG, LG, AIM & BCM

Remember Dr Thigarajah's word of encouragement for us? He described 7 bible characters and one of them is Jeremiah.

- Abraham – God will intensify your union and communion with Him.
- Joseph – God has made a way for you.
- Moses – God will part the Red Sea and destroy your enemies.
- Joshua – God will bring down your walls of Jericho.
- Gideon – God will put His might into the hearts of His people.
- Solomon – God will give wisdom to His people.
- **Jeremiah – God will put His Word in their mouth.**

Put God's Word in your mouth – let it nourish you, season your tongue (the tongue is life, James said) and burn in your heart (like Jeremiah)

2. Accountability

We noticed that even though the instruments have tuned to the oboe, they have one more thing to do – that is to play in harmony with one another, in sinc, in melody, in tempo.

Isn't the church looks like an orchestra to you? – we are different in skin color, temperament, maturity, intelligence, skills, size, etc but God has brought us together.

Why did God put us in a community? Because spiritual growth is experienced in a community. Apart from the community, we will most likely stray spiritually.

Just look at the natural consequence of a birth – a baby is not born into nothingness. He doesn't grow up by himself. Somebody gave birth to him and nourishes him. Likewise, we are born again into God's Kingdom – God gave us spiritual birth and put us into His spiritual family called the church.

Friends, in order for us to achieve God's purpose, we need the church, our spiritual family.

Jeremiah has his church (not per se). But he has people whom God placed to help him fulfil His role and call:

- Jeremiah has his Baruch - his scribe (Jer 32:12 – 16) – people to help us, who believe in us
- Jeremiah has his Recabites – his example (Jer 35) - more matured friends, aunts & uncles in the faith that have ate salt more than we eat rice, models that we can emulate, examples we can follow as they follow Christ... Prov 27:17 – As irons sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”
- Jeremiah has his Ebed Melek – his rescuer (Jer 38:7-13) – a few who know our vulnerability, weakness, failures and help lift us up (trusted friend, leader, pastor, etc). People whom we can be accountable to. Lovingly correct us. Boldly confront our blind spots.

Many times we resist accountability is because we fear people's opinion about our failure –(the fear is one of the mask of pride); its not that we do not value privacy, we do. But the act of disclosure to a few is a healthy sign of an authentic person – humbles enough to have a few speak into his life

Find our Ebed Melek – in our thought life, what we see over the computer screens, the way we make business deals, the way we approach relationships, how we behave in our courtship, etc

We need to play with our Baruch, Ebed-Melek, & Recabite. To keep us on track. Align to God's will and hit the bull's eye.

Where to find? In LGs. In ministries. No where else.

Conclusion

My story - Got saved at 13; attended SCG, RR, CAs, PMtg (general purpose)

Heard God called me at 16 (specific purpose), P. Steven counseled “where you are, God is preparing you”(preparation)

Attended AIM – ministerial foundation laid for what I do today (preparation)

Finished A levels and sensed heavy burden to serve God full time. By now pastors know about my call, my family know about my call, I lived a consistent Christian life. Even my non Christian sister gave her blessing as she knows that I'm doing something that help others live a better life.

I asked God this question : “God, show me what I will eventually do”. God says “take a step at a time”. A year at a time. If God were to show me then what I am doing now, I’ll chicken out.

2 year-purpose in Bintulu – ‘that’s my Bible School’ – I was physically weak (sore throat & diarrhea almost every month), no experience whatsoever, city boy but God’s power made perfect in my weakness.

All that I learnt from the SCG, CA mtgs, RR & AIM proved to be very helpful – God’s Word was my oboe in that foreign land

Accountability to others helped me fulfil my purpose well. Corresponded with several (no emails then) and received more than 300 letters (from Pastors, esp P. Steven, CA friends, from BCM students, family).

Assisted the Outreach Pastor drive van, clean toilet, arrange chairs vacuum floor (when I vacuum the platform, I’ll preach to empty chairs), teach Iban Sunday School

When I left, one of the TQ card from one of the leaders wrote – When my son grow up, I want him just to be like you, serving God. Exhilarating. I also pioneered the BM Youth group (God used my command of BM).

Let God’s purpose for our lives be done in 2011.

Apply His Word & be in a community.

Your life will be a symphony for His glory!