

The Joseph Project

From Substance Abuse to a Wholesome Life

Vacaville, California

Messages from Inmates of California State Prison - Solano

Volume 3

In September we held a banquet celebrating the completion of two classes; Great Dads and our fourth 40 Days of Purpose campaign, with inmates who had completed requirements established by Sol Irving, Correctional Counselor III and myself. Two hundred seventeen men completed one and/or both of these classes. The celebration featured worship led by the inmates along with brief testimonies from several team members.

The celebration included a barbecue meal prepared by Chris and Carol Davis of Mission of Grace Foundation; Arquilla Conner, of Men of Purpose provided cookies; *ebenezer outreach ministry* provided soda and additional items to complete the meals. It was a memorable time for our volunteers who had the opportunity to break bread with our brothers in Christ. Volunteers who served were Brett Braidman, Dave Dove, Ernest Echelberger, Loyal Friesen, Herman Littleton, Ramon Molina, Daniel Robinson, and Robert Silva, volunteers unable to attend were Richard Atchley, David Fernandes, and Ron Handa. At this time we have begun two new classes; Passport to Purpose, written by Carol Davis and Going

for the Goal, a Prison Fellowship Program.

The comments below are from a few of the inmates who completed the Great Dads and/or 40 Days of Purpose program:

Victor F.

God's purposes in my life are not only as clearly visible to me now as they have ever been. I have obtained the knowledge of things I must do in life that will not only last a lifetime but an eternity. I've come to know more about the things in life that are more important than those things we may desire in life that aren't as important, such as love, kindness, compassion, understanding, forgiveness, truth, and things of that nature that can only be touched by the human heart. God has a plan for us and we tend to want to replace that plan with our own. His plan will always work better because it's the only way. I think the Creator would know what's best for His creation.

Ruben C.

My journey began when I made a decision to sign up for the 40 Days of Purpose. I am a Roman Catholic Christian brother and a member of The Legion of Mary

in Solano Prison. Once I was assigned to a group, according to our book number, our fellowship was formed in God's eyes. Then we took a few minutes to introduce ourselves and in a very short time I was among different religious faiths. What I learned in the 40 Days of Purpose is that I can share with my brothers in Christ why we are God's children and why we must, in Purpose #2, Day Eighteen, "Experiencing Life Together," as stated in Colossians 3:15, "*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*" And in Romans 12:5, "*so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*" Everyone has some gift that can be used for the benefit of the community. When the instruction on justification through faith is correctly grasped, the possessor of a gift will understand that it is not an instrument of self-aggrandizement. Possession of a gift is not an index to quality of faith; rather, the gift is a challenge to faithful use. Thank you to the brothers and sisters in Christ who brought 40 Days of Purpose together as a community. My prayers will always be with you

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during my church service.

Billy H.

The 40 Days of Purpose program has sure made me look back on my life and look at things in a godly way. It has made me want to change my life and way of living around for the things that please God. I have a lot of work to do yet as a young baby in His Word, but I know I will make it through my life sentence in here now if I just stay focused on God and the things He has waiting for me. I think this program is very well put together and really helps the men here in prison get to know each other as a friend and not by other prison ways of their thinking. It has brought us together as one. I have gotten a lot out of this program. I now know what I'm here on earth for, to make my Father God happy and to have a personal relationship with Jesus always.

Anonymous

The 40 Days of Purpose has impacted my life by keeping me grounded in the Word. I got a lot of inspiration from *The Purpose Driven Life*, especially the positive message and the reference to Scripture to keep me in the Word of God and focused on my purpose of giving glory to God in every way. Also, I enjoyed the group discussions and interacting with other people, it was great to hear other people's feelings. Glad I had the opportunity to participate.

Victor H.

As for my participating in the 40 Days of Purpose this has been and

always will be an ignition to my growth in Christian service. My reading of *The Purpose Driven Life* has awakened spiritual energies inside me that could have only been exposed by the Gospel revealed through this book, and being a participant in the 40 Days of Purpose. This has actually been a boot camp to prepare me for true complete service to God. After all, my creation is for this purpose. For my knowing God, by serving Him, and living a life that becomes more like Christ every day. I have gained more zeal to becoming a full-time servant to God in service.

Sean G.

Actually to my surprise this program brought my brother and me even closer together. Both of us filled in some blanks and discussed things that never seemed to have existed before. Being a man of faith I believe the Creator put us together to mend, heal, and build. I was already in the group, my brother joined while I was still at work. I don't believe in coincidence and I don't believe we were placed in the same group by man's hands. I believe we were meant to be in this group and I am also witnessing my brother's spiritual growth even though he is the eldest. So for me, 40 Days has given me my older brother in a renewed and continued shining light.

Anonymous

I grew up going to church and was a young believer but due to negative peer pressure I got involved in worldly activities and

gave my back to God and religion. Being in prison has gotten me back on the right track again and having a life sentence has made me realize the price I paid for doing evil. It is a tough lesson to learn! Though it is really difficult for me to share my true feelings with others about God and faith, I am much closer today to the spiritual. This 40 Days of Purpose has made me think of how I hope to be and what I don't want in my life but choose to get involved in, all that is good and uplifting for me, my family, and society. I ask God for forgiveness of my crime and sins and hope to redeem myself in the future by doing well and dedicate time to the purpose God has for me. My verse that sums it all up is Romans 5:8, "*But God demonstrates his own love in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" I have learned a lot from this seminar and hope to expand my knowledge in order to become a better person.

Thomas M.

I've spent the last thirty-two years in prison and only once did I ever step inside a chapel since being incarcerated. While at this institution a few Christian brothers invited me to participate in the 40 Days of Purpose, saying it will enrich my life, I decided to go and besides I said to myself, it will look good for the parole board. Never did I realize the change that was about to occur in me. I never wanted to be a hypocrite but I was always criticizing those who were going to church, always watching them, looking for the wrong they were doing. But I was

the hypocrite; I was acting just like the Pharisees I recently learned about. I thought I could serve God all by myself, in my own way. But I was wrong. The 40 Days of Purpose program impacted my life by making me realize that I cannot do things on my own. I need the full body of the church, my group, in order to make it because I can't stand alone. This is a very condensed version of my testimony, but I hope it at least conveys in part what *The Purpose Driven Life* has done for me.

Ray Eric C.

The 40 Days of Purpose gave me a better look at my life, in time I will learn my shape. It was very uplifting; I hope more people will read the book. May God bless them.

Remar S.

Although I've been a born-again Christian since the early 1990's, this workshop has taught me about finding my purpose. I've contemplated a lot about why I'm on earth and I believe I asked God so many times for the answer. At times I feel as if God is far away or has neglected me because of bad things that happened. When I look back, however, good memories outweighed the bad experiences in my life. This workshop has reinforced my belief and personal relationship with our Father God and Lord Jesus Christ. Come to think of it, the Bible doesn't promise life will be easy, nor things will come my way. One thing I know for sure, He will always be there and be the same,

yesterday, today, and forever. It is both a privilege and an honor for a believer to serve God, after all my purpose is to live for Him each day.

Ronnie D.

Pastor Rick Warren, praise the name of Jesus. I am housed at CSP-Solano in Vacaville, California. What God has done in my life through 40 Days of Purpose? This is my second time participating in this program and it's been a blessing this time more than the last. One thing that stands out more than any other is Purpose #2, Day 15, "Formed for God's Family." I'm sure you know that we, as Christians, can be set in our own ways sometimes and that can damage our relationships with those who God has intentionally placed in our paths. We go through the motions of being religiously correct by saying, "I love you brother (or sister)," while we are in the sanctuary on Sundays or whichever day we attend special services and then go on the remainder of the week not being concerned. This ministry has taught me how to have more patience and to love my brothers as they are. Chapter One of *The Purpose Driven Life*, "What on Earth Am I Here For?" has answered some of the questions that I didn't know the solutions to. God has given me those answers. I've learned to love more even when the person in question can't show or tell me they love me, because that's how Jesus is. Thank you so much Lord for Pastor Rick Warren and all those who have helped in this blessed journey.

Andrew R.

I've always known God and know I now have to grow with Him and what to do for my ministry to serve Him or at least more of an idea. My evangelism prayer has been challenged by opportunities and I've been getting used to showing my heart to others about my life for Him. I have been current on all my readings; memory verse has been a hard challenge, still working on it. In my home church, my wife and I are very busy and active, sometimes very overwhelmed at least six nights a week. During this time I've been subjected to trials and struggles but I'm still here, thank God.

Allan P.

I've attended most of the religious services but I found no fellowship. For years I've craved fellowship to fulfill my purpose, even before I ever heard about the 40 Days of Purpose program. Then, when I signed up to be in the program, I finally found what I'm looking for. It was in the small group study where I found true fellowship. At first it was awkward, getting to know each other and *The Purpose Driven Life*. As in the other groups, when everybody finally opened up to deep topics, I used my gift and ability to reveal the truth that a lot of believers don't see or just choose to ignore on the topic of fellowship. That moment, the meaning of true fellowship set in. I always supported church ministries but the group study with my seriousness to connect gave me hope for true fellowship and courage.

Robert R.

This was an eye-opening class and it touched my soul and I know how to be a true servant to the Lord and everyone I come in contact with. So, the 40 Days of Purpose opened me up to my purpose in life and I want to let my friends and family read this book so they can learn their purpose in life too.

Clifford

Attending the 40 Days of Purpose has opened my eyes to a new meaning of life. It has shown me that I do have a purpose and that I'm not just a number. I believe there are many more (not who just went through the program here in Solano) but elsewhere that feel the same as I. I'm very thankful for Rick Warren's book and all it has taught me. I still have a long way to travel but with each day new meaning comes to me. God bless all, thank you.

Brother Hound Dog D.

I am a lifer, this class has helped me in my evangelism, II Timothy 4:5, *"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."* To win souls for Jesus and help give output to reach those in darkness. Rick Warren reminds me of Pastor Greg L. of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, California. I watched the 700 Club (CBN) and saw how he interviewed Obama and McCain and asked them what the Holy Spirit and Jesus means in their lives. Well they mean a lot in my life. He's my God, my Savior, my Provider, and He's always there

when I am at my lowest point. My wife died to be with Jesus, I lost the will to live but God brought His angels to rescue me and used me for God's glory. *"To the Lord I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill."* and, *"Arise, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God!"* (Psalms 3:4,7) and *"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."* (Psalms 91:11). *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."* (Psalms 34:18). *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."* (Hebrew 10:25).

James H.

Being Christian raised; trying to follow God's Word, I thought life was pretty fulfilling. It took the program for me to realize I had a purpose. Even when I was reborn after falling to the Devil and drugs, God accepted me back. Now I am focused on a living mission trying to open up with more fellowship. God did good using small groups for people like me; the trust grows quicker and the knowledge shared from the experience helped so much, opening my eyes to a purpose. Being unable to remember readings, the memory verses were challenging such as Romans 12:5, *"so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all others."* Another part of the program that I enjoyed and got involved with was the discussion questions; so many different views and opinions

brought understanding. Knowing I have a purpose, I really do want to be like Christ with open eyes. Knowing I'm part of a family and not just an individual. I'll use empathy and concern with prayer, loving life trying to fulfill God's wishes.

Jeff R.

My gains have been so very beneficial! I have met many new friends and acquaintances, inmates, prison staff, and those from the outside who helped bring this presentation to Solano. I found God two years ago and go to weekly Bible study and church service. I have a much better outlook on life and this has changed my attitude greatly in the right direction. I am a long way from perfect, but I really try to be a better man and try to be aware of my actions and speech and be more of a godly man. I truly enjoyed my small group and listening to my fellow group members trials and tribulations. It was a great all around presentation and seminar and I am very glad to have been part of it. Thank you.

Artarilo D.

I am very happy and truly blessed to be part of the 40 Days of Purpose program which has highly influenced a motivating force in my life. I am extremely elated and truly blessed in what I have ascertained in our small group. Sharing and encouraging each other is indeed a wonderful feeling and experience. I have never ever experienced as much love and respect from any group that I have ever participated in. It has encouraged me to

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examine myself instead of judging others.

Michael G.

Dear Friends:

The Purpose Driven Life from Rick Warren has made me open my eyes and my heart. It has helped me have peace of mind. It has helped me to learn how my purpose in life can please Him! I want to look forward to my new life as a Christian and one day I will see His face in eternity. I want our Lord to use me as He sees fit, I want to be used to help others. I just don't want to walk the walk while I'm locked up. I'm going to do whatever it's going to take. I have another twelve months left on my sentence and God has put me here for a reason. It has been hard, but with the help of the Lord, this has made my life a whole lot better. Thank you very much for caring, God bless.

Ernest R.

The effect of learning about God's purpose in my life gave me a clear mission at present, which is to build my character each moment by the grace, mercy, power, and will of God Almighty. To function as a witness in correcting the differences we have as human beings on this earth. Through the 40 Days of Purpose I can see clearly that a man who represses his interaction because of religious labels cannot understand that the most important process of Christ's mission is His love for lost human beings in this world which at present is the most important thing to me.

Anthony E.

God has taken me out of my comfort zone during this time, placing me into the facilitator position. By doing that I saw *The Purpose Driven Life* book in a different way. The small group study was great and the people brought some great ideas to discuss and lighten the hearts of the other men in the group. The main thing though is how God used me to speak and lead a group. To really make a difference in me, I didn't think that it could be possible, yet, He placed me in authority, had me lead a small group, do daily readings and make everything fun instead of dull and not wanting to do a group. The experience of what God's purpose in my life is opened me up to many different points of view that I never saw before until God placed me in this group, position, and ministry which I shared with the large group as well as small group.

Ron R.

In the beginning I had no intentions of participating in the 40 Days of Purpose but when I was asked by Joyce V. [staff volunteer] if I had signed up for the program, I could not lie, I said, "No." Joyce signed me up and it changed my life. The first day, the group I was in passed around the small group study guide and my younger brother's name was there, that made me continue in the program and I believe it was God who made this happen. My brother and I were able to build from this experience, but it was me who learned the importance of listening, it took forty-eight years

for me to open up, we are now able to deal with the loss of our mom. Though it has been a journey it is one I now know she could and would be proud of us both. The 40 Days of Purpose has allowed me to see my shortcomings, face them and now work on them. It has also allowed me to see my brother as he is today and not as when we were kids.

Keir R.

First I would like to give all glory, honor, and praise to God. I would like to thank Pastor Tim May and his staff for taking time to come in and minister to us and facilitating the classes, 40 Days of Purpose and Great Dads. I really enjoy facilitating and being part of the small groups. Reading the 40 Days of Purpose has drawn me closer to God and has helped me understand my purpose as a Christian man and Great Dads has given me a greater understanding of my responsibilities of being a better father. I am also thankful to the men the Lord has put into the groups that share their personal experiences that give me a great outlook on what it takes to be a better person. We're thankful for the programs that Pastor Tim May has brought into the prison and look forward to future classes, Passport to Purpose and the Genesis Process. I believe these programs are much needed so that we, as men, can be productive citizens in society because the Word of God says iron sharpens iron, "*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*" (Proverbs 27:17). Romans says,

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“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2). We thank you for being obedient to the Word of God and not forgetting those who are in prison *“Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”* (Hebrews 13:3). In closing, I thank God for mercy, grace, and compassion. So let us not forget to love one another for love is God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God, *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”* (1John 4:7).

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