

Mission in Life

Mission: the special purpose or task for which a person is destined in life; calling. [Dictionary]

Mission: The operation assigned an individual or unit. [Military]

Mission (Personal) Statement: a written statement summarizing a person's purpose; the essence or summary of a vision statement (*if the vision is the painting, the mission is the title*). [Dyson]

The Purpose of Life

Have you considered the purpose of your life?

If a child, a colleague, or another seeker asked you about the purpose of life, how would you answer?

If you are one of the millions of people world-wide who have read *The Purpose-Driven Life*, have you moved beyond reading to take action to write your statement of purpose? If you are serious about wanting to identify and fulfill your purpose, you have or you will write a mission statement.

Over a decade ago, a friend introduced someone to me at a business function as an "author, coach and teacher of life leadership." The new acquaintance quickly asked, "You are a philosopher! I have been thinking about my mission. What do you think is the purpose of life"? My mouth opened to speak though I hesitated with a humble realization that while I had considered the question and discussed it philosophically, my answer was insufficient. I am grateful for his probing question because my answer inspired me to revise my life mission statement, which I discovered dealt with two parts of the purpose of life.

Three Interconnected Parts

After investing a few minutes per day for a month shaping my mission statement, I concluded:

The purpose of life has three connected parts:

*To live a spiritual journey—faithfully;
love and serve others—meaningfully,
and do my best—joyously.*

Some prefer to reverse the order and ascend to "spiritual" as the most important part of our purpose. Each of the three parts connect to and overlap with the others. This mission is grounded in spiritual teachings and common sense.

1. *To live a spiritual journey faithfully* recognizes, we are *spiritual* beings living physical lives. We value spirituality, love, and stewardship. Major religions believe existence in our bodies on earth represents only a part of our lives and developing our spiritual selves increases as a priority for enlightened persons. We seek to feel more connected to God, to fulfill our callings, and to prepare for eternal life. We are *called* to discover our callings, and to be faithful we must seek to understand and fulfill them. We choose to lead our lives. *Faithfully* reminds us that if we have "active faith," we have courage to transcend fear and we attempt with a balanced level of discipline to act on best practices for significant living. One call of success, *live your priorities*, which becomes more clear as you discern your callings and choices. In the Christian faith, we called to "Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, body, and spirit."
2. *Love and serve others meaningfully* calls us to value love and servant leadership. We *love* and care for our families and friends, then others we can help. To *serve* means provide servant leadership—adding value for others and ourselves, with a servant's heart. We encourage others through our deeds as well as our words. *Meaningfully* denotes adding value for others. Interpret from Scripture "The Golden Rule," which states, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," as doing for them as they value, which might mean differently than you would have them do for you. Meaningful also means making a difference, having impact, through our professional works as well as our personal relationships. We are called to have an impact, to leave a legacy, to serve our world.

3. *Do my best joyously* denotes values such as choice, courage, commitment, stewardship, and joy. We are called to do our best with gifts and talents we have been given, which includes giving noble effort to important activities and investing in improvement of our attitudes and abilities. Many of us do well with the hard work ethic, though the qualifier of working with *joy* proves more challenging. *Joyously* means that we choose to live happily in labor and in leisure.

To do our best and to love others are spiritual callings. Developing ourselves and serving well gives us more to give away and helps us set an example for others. Likewise, spiritual awareness and faith encourage us to take care of ourselves and love others. Every activity we have within the seven areas of life—physical, financial, professional, personal, social, philanthropical, and spiritual—fit within these three purposes of life.

7 Core Values in the Purpose of Life

Looking closer at the purpose of life helps us identify core values and their meaning.

1. *Live—love and respect life, enjoy the journey of living*
2. *Spiritual—connect to our creator and our callings*
3. *Faithfully—courageous choices, commitments, and character*
4. *Love—caring servant leadership and contribution*
5. *Meaningfully—do unto others as they need and want*
6. *Best—develop into my best-self as a “ten-talent person,” fulfilling my callings, gifts, and talents*
7. *Joyously—faithful courage and confidence optimistically making the best of circumstances with appreciation of blessings.*

Vision for fulfilling the three main parts of my Mission (values, beliefs and results I desire summarized in my constitution)

This is a vision statement excerpt from my plan for life, shared here to show a sample of how understanding the purpose of life helps me write a vision that helps me think about my best-self aimed at my mission.

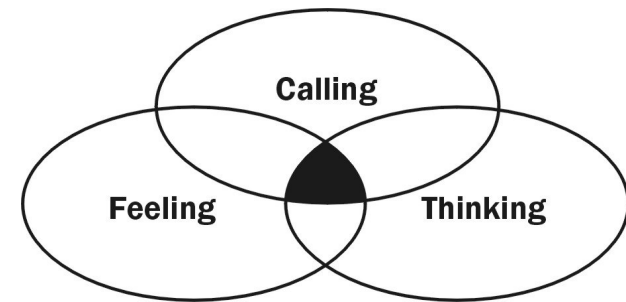
1. *I seek understanding of my highest spiritual callings and make inspired choices to fulfill them, preparing my soul for eternal life. I seek truth and share it with those wanting to know.*
2. *I love and serve others according to their needs and wants, matched with my callings, helping them fulfill their callings.*
3. *I do my best joyously—improving my mind, body, spirit, service and stewardship—to fulfill my callings and to care for others.*

When we understand the core of our mission and vision, our instincts improve at helping us focus and make decisions that align more often with what is most important.

Decision-Making Model with Three Filters

The three main parts of the purpose of life align with three filters for discerning and deciding—*calling, feeling, and thinking*. This model summarizes three main considerations in the purpose of life and serves as a tool to make decisions in the moment and through deliberation.

1. *Spiritual calling*: what we discern God is calling us to do; what our “gut” tells us.
2. *Emotional feeling*: what we want to do.
3. *Logical thinking*: what makes sense when we assess options, what advisors tell us.



Seven Tests for the Purpose of Life

I hope you agree, these *seven tests*—and *three filters*—for considering the purpose of life add depth in understanding and validation for confidence in our mission statements:

1. Universal Mission / Purpose of Life Statement

1. God/Higher Power: Live a spiritual journey—faithfully
2. Others: Love and serve others—meaningfully
3. Self: Do my best—joyously.

2. Scripture

1. God/Higher Power: “Love God with all your heart”
2. Others: “Love your neighbor as yourself”
3. Others: Love yourself to fulfill your callings, gifts, and talents.

3. Religion

1. God/Higher Power: God
2. Others: Fellow believers
3. Self: You

4. Principles

1. God/Higher Power: Natural Law—like gravity, influences us regardless of beliefs or values
2. Others: Reciprocity—do unto others; what goes around, comes around; for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.
3. Self: Invest-return—“as you sow, so shall you reap”; you get back what you invest.

5. Science

1. God/Higher Power: Cosmos
2. Others: Relativity
3. Self: Cause and effect

6. Values and Beliefs

1. God/Higher Power: Inspiration
2. Others: Harmony
3. Self: Stewardship

7. Choices / considerations for discernment in decisions

1. God/Higher Power: Spiritual calling (what you believe God is calling you to do)
2. Others: Logical thinking (what trusted advisors tell you, what your mind tells you makes sense or is best)

3. Self: Emotional feeling (what you want to do).

This table may help you see the relationship between the seven test and the three filters.

7 Tests for the Purpose of Life	God/Higher Power	Others	Self
1. Universal Mission Statement	Live a spiritual journey—faithfully	Love and serve others—meaningfully	Do my best—joyously.
2. Scripture	“Love God with all your heart”	“Love your neighbor as yourself”	Love yourself to fulfill your callings, gifts, and talents.
3. Religion	God/Creator	Fellow believers	You
4. Principles	Natural Law—like gravity, influences us regardless of beliefs or values	Reciprocity—“do unto others; what goes around, comes around; for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.”	Invest-return—“as you sow, so shall you reap”; you get back what you invest.
5. Science	Cosmos/ Energy	Relativity	Cause and effect
6. Values and Beliefs	Inspiration	Harmony	Stewardship
7. Choices / considerations for discernment in decisions	Spiritual calling (what you believe God is calling you to do)	Logical thinking (what makes sense, what trusted advisors say)	Emotional feeling (what you want to do).

From Mission to Action—Implementation

The value of adopting and reviewing often this or a similar life mission statement includes helping us focus on important roles and goals, particularly when urgent influences dilute our intent. For example, once we internalize the principle that developing our souls should be a major part of life, many find more motivation and time for spiritual matters in the “prime of life” before feeling an urgent need to do so, such as near the end of physical life.

We should create written visions and goals that lead us to desired behaviors and results within the purpose of life. For example, create a vision by describing what “doing my best joyously” would look like when you succeed. Then ask what important activities would lead you to that vision. Examples:

1. Decide to act with courage on my callings.
2. Write and review at least weekly my plan for life—mission, vision, important roles and goals, time priorities, resolutions, solutions to problems and opportunities....
3. Invest at least 5% of my time (an hour or so daily, seven hours weekly) improving my
 - ◆ mind (books, tapes that educate, inspire...)
 - ◆ body (nutrition, exercise...)
 - ◆ spirit (prayer, study...)
 - ◆ service (work, training...) and
 - ◆ stewardship (life planning and improvement).

Investing 1% of our time in each area (10-15 minutes per day, an hour or more per week) serves as a foundation for development of ourselves, providing stewardship of our gifts and talents. Set aside time for important activities (impact) weekly. If we reserve time for priorities first, we have more focus on the important than on the urgent and create more impact with more balance.

In our challenging, real-time world, we should balance philosophical ideas with practical application. Self-proclaimed pragmatists who question the value of mission statements in the “real world,” rest assured, this life mission statement or one developed on your own can enrich your

focus, motivation, productivity, and relationships—if you internalize and act on it.

Many seminar students, clients, and other friends view the Three Purposes as an universal mission statement and have adopted it as their own. If you feel similarly, you have my enthusiastic permission to also use or adapt it for your life.

May you PLAN and LEAD an inspired LIFE! — David

“The purpose of life is to live it,
to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and
without fear for newer and richer experience.”

-Eleanor Roosevelt-