

## ***Significance Syndrome***

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Psychologists tell us that every human being has the need to feel significant—to have meaning, influence, effect, and importance. When this need goes unmet, serious dysfunction results. Many of us today are obsessed with our significance...or the lack of it: Are we significant? How can we find significance? The search for significance and the pursuit of it, once we think we know where it can be found, spans: higher education, career, status, fame, material possessions, beauty, a perfect body, relationships, etceteras. But these ‘things’ will come up woefully empty in the significance search and will not fill our significance void. They may bring a hint of it, momentarily, but they will not provide lasting **meaning, influence, effect, and importance**.

If our significance is based on ‘who we are’ or ‘what we have’ or ‘what we do’, then sooner or later we’ll find ourselves on shifting sand—slipping from what we thought was significance to insignificance in a heartbeat. And we’d be so wrong to tie our significance on such changeable statements. Look no further than the rich, famous, and beautiful people of today, because, more often than not, you’ll hear them say in an interview that they are still searching....

But we can ask God these questions: “who are we”? and “what is our purpose in Your grand plan”? He alone knows what he made us for. He wants our lives to have **meaning, influence, effect, and importance**, and he knows how to bring that about. Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Life* says, “You are not an accident. Even before the universe was created, God had you in mind, and he planned you for his purposes. These purposes will extend far beyond the few years you will spend on earth. You were made to last forever! You must begin with God, your Creator, and his reasons for creating you. You were made by God and for God, and until you understand that, life will never make sense.”

• The significance search seems to always begin with the question: **Who am I?** And it’s not a new question: Moses, David, and Solomon all asked it!

• Moses questioned his significance and qualifications for what God assigned him from the burning bush—11 times, beginning with “*Who am I? that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?*” Exodus 3:11.

• After David became King of Israel, he asked the LORD twice: “*Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me thus far?*” 2 Samuel 7:18 and 1 Chronicles 29:12-14.

• Then in 2 Chronicles 2:6 Solomon asked, “*Who then am I to build a temple for him....*”

God's word answers! If I have believed in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, repented of sin, and received him as Savior and Lord, then "I am a child of God". Though every human being was created by God, not everyone is a child of God. We've said that to try and come to God any other way shakes out as bargaining with him: "If I do this, God will have to do that." In error, people conclude that they're saved by their own significance: what they do, what they experience or what they know: works, emotions or knowledge. But all of these fall into human effort, human achievement, and are far, far from the divine accomplishment of the Christ who saves—biblical Christianity.

Don't miss this. **We are significant because of Whose we are!** Our true and lasting significance is locked in knowing and growing in relationship with our Father, through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God's redemptive plan is to make us right with him...something only he can do! The best time to receive Christ was years ago, but the next best time is now! And in salvation, it's *Who* you know—*Whose* you are—that counts.

Let's look at the four words that describe *significance*: 1) meaning, 2) influence, 3) effect, and 4) importance.

### **I. Meaning**—*purpose in life*

Before God created any one of his six-day wonders, he knew what its grand purpose would be. He planned for what he "created" to have particular use—and man was no exception: Of Jeremiah God said, "**Before** I formed you in the womb I knew you, **before** you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" Jeremiah 1:5. God didn't create and then ask "What will I do with this person?" or "What will be the purpose of this?" We can be sure that God's intended purpose for his every-created-thing determined how he made it—**the plan he had for it dictated the form he gave it!**

Questions about 'who we are' or 'what we have' or 'what we do' can only be answered by our creator! Before God created us, he determined what role or roles we would fill and exactly how we would serve his purposes, for how long, and who and when and how we would influence others for Him. Mordecai to Esther in 4:14c—"And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this" Acts 13:36a—"For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep...."

God holds the key to our meaning and purpose. "***The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; Your love, O Lord, endures forever...***" Psalm 138:8. We mustn't follow our own plans—our own way—or the crowd: Those who follow the crowd usually get lost in it. The significance of the postage stamp is in its ability just to stick!

God's purposes for our lives include:

- His delight—**Colossians 1:16b** “...all things were created by Him and for Him.” God planned us, even if our parents did not.
- His children—**1 John 3:1** “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called *the children of God!* *And that is what we are!*”
- His likeness—God wants us to “be” like Jesus. **Romans 8:29a** “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son....” We can change things; but only God can change us!
- His service—Our call to salvation included our call to service. God has us on this earth at this time for a particular purpose—to serve.
- His ambassadors—Jesus calls us not only to “come to Him,” but to “go for Him.” We are to work with God and to represent Him to the world—helping others come to know Him.

## **II. Influence**—*sphere of*

Our faithfulness to God will have an influence on someone: In the briefest of Bible biographies in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, Scripture records, “*Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, ‘I gave birth to him in pain.’* <sup>10</sup> *Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, ‘Oh, that you would **bless me and enlarge my territory** (enlarge my sphere of influence). **Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm** so that I will be free from pain.’ And God granted his request”—end of story! Someone said that there is very little difference between people—but that “little” can make all the difference. Jabez had an uncompromising faith in God, and we know that by the several faith-requests that he made. And by the very account of Jabez unexpectedly and abruptly interrupting this portion of Scripture, **God made sure his influence would reach us today!***

Henry van Dyke said, “We long to leave something behind us which shall last, some influence of good which shall be transmitted through our children, some impress of character or action which shall endure and perpetuate itself. There is only one way in which we can do this, only one way in which our lives can receive any lasting beauty and dignity; and that is by being taken up into the great plan of God. Then the fragments of broken glass glow with an immortal meaning in the design of his great mosaic. Then our work is established, and it becomes part of his work.”

## **III. Effect**—*to cause to happen*

**Hebrews 6:12** “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” There will be a test to prove us:

When the fire is hottest, hold still, for there will be a blessed ‘afterward’; and with Job we may be able to say, “*When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold.*” J. H. McC says, “Not a blow will be permitted to fall upon your shrinking soul but that the love of God permits it, and works out from its depths, blessing, and spiritual enrichment unseen, and unthought of by you.” Again Job 12:1, 10 “*Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? 10 In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.*” There is no limit to what God can make of us and how he can use us to influence, **if** we are willing to let him.

#### **IV. Importance—consequence**

**When we want people to see how great our God is and not how great we are, then great things begin to happen!** The more clearly we see the sovereignty of God, the less perplexed we are by the calamities of man. Genesis 32:24 “*So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.*” Someone else said, “If chosen men and women had never been alone in deepest silence open-doored to God, no greatness would ever have been dreamed or done.”

We must give up any significance we think we’ve got to receive the eternal significance offered through Christ. God says to find ourselves, we must loose ourselves (Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 17:33, and John 12:25). Our *significance* is locked up in the Lord God! We are living lives we don’t deserve...called grace, and offered before we were created. The sin-covering blood of Calvary extends as far into the past as the future. Ephesians 2:8-10 “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which **God prepared in advance for us to do.***”

How important are we to God? “*If God is for me, who can be against me?*” Romans 8:31. Max Lucado in his book, *In the Grip of Grace*, says, “God is for you. Had he a calendar, your birthday would be circled. If he drove a car your name would be on his bumper. If there’s a tree in heaven, he’s carved your name in the bark. We know he has a tattoo, and we know what it says.” Isaiah 49:16 “*See, I have engraved **you** on the palms of my hands....*” And Charles Spurgeon says that our name is there, yes, but that is not all: “I have engraved **you**” means that our person, image, case; our circumstances, sins, temptations; our weaknesses, wants, works—everything about us, and all that concerns us is engraved there.

So who are we, really? Are we Lot’s wife, Pharaoh’s daughter, the Samaritan woman, the widow of Zarephath, Mary of Bethany...or perhaps Magdala? Are we Queen of Sheba, Judge Deborah, Prophetess Miriam or...the witch of Endor? Are we a woman with an issue of blood, a woman with a sick daughter, a widow with two coins or are we simply “barren”? **God knows who we are!**

We know that some of these biblical women received significance, not because of any merit in them, but because of God's imprint on them. Can we see that we also are nothing without God, but everything with *His Signature* on us? God gives us his significance as a benefit offered to those who know Christ.

Dr. Lynda Hunter in *Who Am I, Really? A Woman's Journey to God-Significance* says, "God's purpose is not to develop believers with high self-esteems, but to make us like Himself through His Son, the very representation of self-expenditure and servant-hood...and we have to let go of self to follow Christ. God tells us to present our problems to him every day and to ignore the...questions of significance."

Our sense of 'self' emerges from three areas: Worth, belonging, and competence, and can only be found in a relationship with God through his Son!

- Worth—"***I am crucified with Christ***" (Galatians 2:20a).
- Belonging—"*You are a chosen people*" (1 Peter 2:9a).
  - Competence— "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" Philippians 4:13. "*For when I am weak, then I am strong*" 2 Corinthians 12:10. "*My tongue is the pen of a skillful writer*" Psalm 45:1b. God is the skillful writer, and we are the pen in his hand!
- **Mephibosheth** was the last remaining son of Jonathan—son of Saul. Jonathan and David had been fast friends, in fact there was an agreement—cut covenant—between them (1 Samuel 18:3). When Jonathan was killed in battle and David became King of Israel, he asked in 2 Samuel 9:1 "*Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?*"

And there was someone! **Mephibosheth** had grown up in a place called Lo-debar, meaning "not in pasture", and out of David's jurisdiction. A product of a barren land, a crippled leg, a lost crown and estrangement from the King, his father's friend, **Mephibosheth's** life was one of visible insignificance. But when summoned and he stood trembling before King David, **Mephibosheth** learned that he was to be blessed beyond belief—he was shown kindness, restored to his land, and invited to grace the King's table for the rest of his days!

**Mephibosheth** is a picture of me and you—after God graces us with his Son! We are the objects of God's great love. He set his "sign" of love upon us. Psalm 107:43 "*Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD.*" Psalm 87:16 "*The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: This one was born in Zion.*" *Selah.* We have his signature saying "this one is mine", and signed: ***Father.***