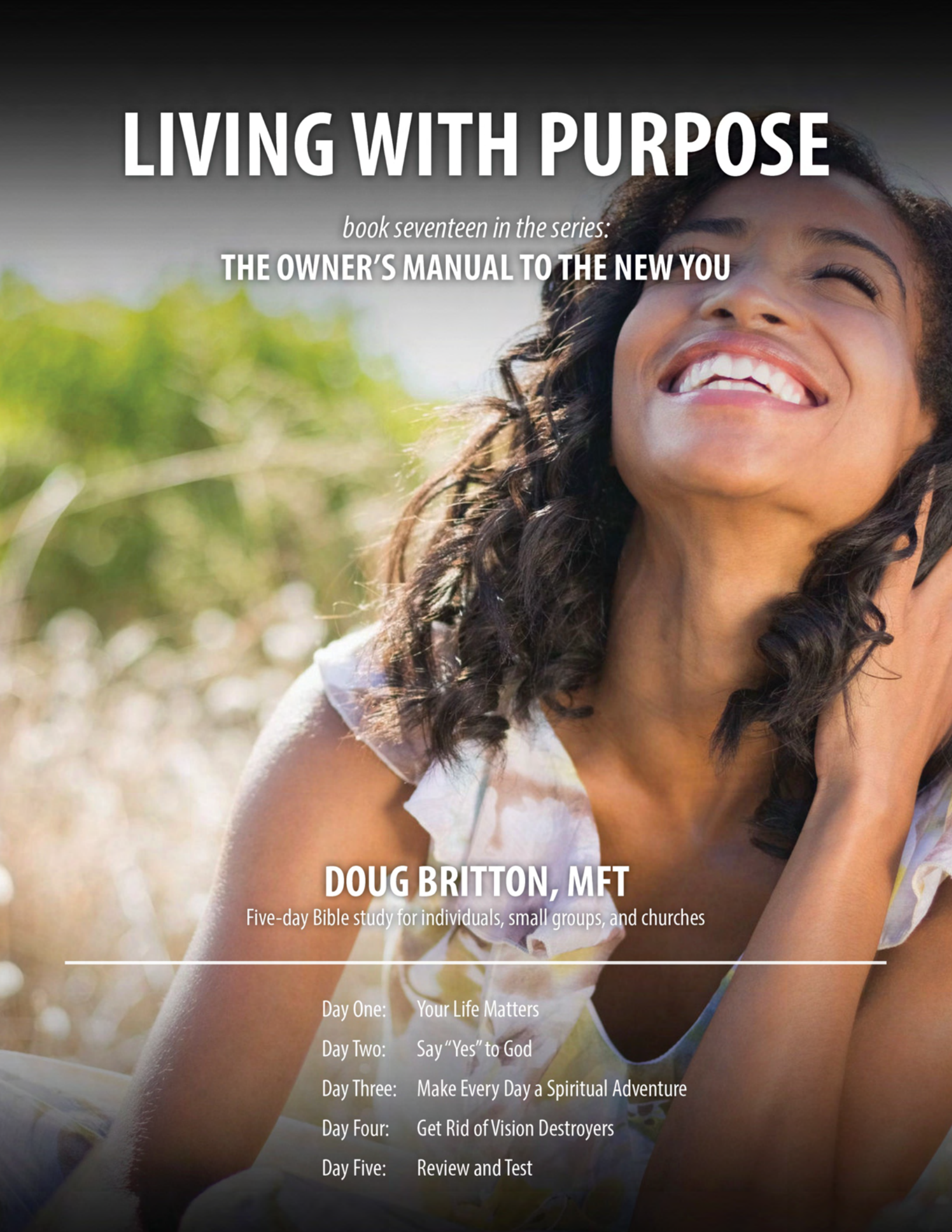

LIVING WITH PURPOSE

book seventeen in the series:

THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU

DOUG BRITTON, MFT

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

Day One:	Your Life Matters
Day Two:	Say "Yes" to God
Day Three:	Make Every Day a Spiritual Adventure
Day Four:	Get Rid of Vision Destroyers
Day Five:	Review and Test

Living with Purpose: Book seventeen in "The Owner's Manual to the New You"

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Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
Book 35: Respecting Authority
Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

Overcoming Personal Problems

Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
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life
tree

Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in "The Owner's Manual to the New You" series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

Small Group Leader's Guidelines

Introduction. These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

Begin and end each study with prayer. Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

Review homework. Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

Personalize the lesson. Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses. Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

Get everyone involved. The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

Consider breaking up into smaller groups to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

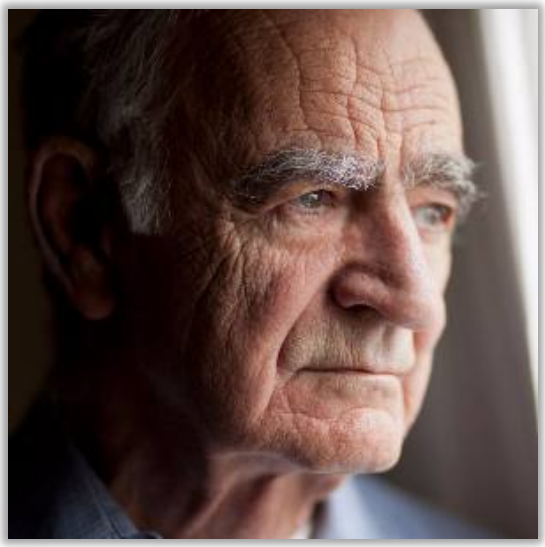
Use day five for a review and test. Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

Want to Learn More?

Free online resources: For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups

Small group leader's book: For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups.

Day One: Your Life Matters



When I am counseling, people often tell me they don't think their life has a purpose, or that their life seems meaningless. Some say they are so busy they don't have time even to pray.

Others say they sleepwalk through life. They wake up, go to work, come home, eat dinner, spend time on social media, play a few online games, watch some videos, then go to bed. Their weekend routine is different, but overall each day seems pretty much the same.

That's not how God wants us to live. He created us for a purpose. He wants us to impact this world for him. What we do matters.

> *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)*

Discussion question

1. What do you think Ephesians 2:10 means? Does it apply to you? Explain your answer.

Evaluate yourself

Do you have a sense of purpose as you go through each day? Many people don't. Here are some common things people have told me. Check any that describe you:

- ☐ **I drift through life.** It's like I am sleepwalking, simply "putting in my time."
- ☐ **I get bored.** I do the same thing day after day.
- ☐ **I'm too busy.** I am constantly on the go.
- ☐ **I am self-centered.** I am consumed by the search for entertainment, excitement, or fun. I can spend hours on sports, TV, video games, or social media.
- ☐ **I am consumed by problems.** My boss is unfair, my co-workers don't like me, everything is breaking down at home, my spouse nags, and my children are a pain in the neck.
- ☐ **I don't think I have anything to offer.** I don't have any skills, talents, or abilities that could make much of a difference anywhere. Whatever I have to offer, which isn't much, others can do better.
- ☐ **I have failed in too many ways.** God wouldn't want to use me.

Discussion questions

2. Do you feel a sense of purpose in your life? Explain your answer.
3. Did you check any of the above boxes? If so, how do they describe you?

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God has a purpose for your life

Whoever you are—whatever your life experiences, talents, physical ability, or role—you have a purpose. Let's look again at Ephesians 2:10:

> *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)*

Notice two key points in this verse:

- God created you. You are not an accident.
- God has a plan for you. You have a purpose in life.

What you do today matters

In a minute, you will read some of your "big picture" purposes. But first, I'd like to say that every hour of your life matters. Every time you say something, and every time you make a decision, you have an opportunity to make a difference for Christ.

> *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)*

Discussion questions

4. What does the above verse mean when it says, "Be very careful, then, how you live"?
5. What sort of opportunities do you think it means when it says "making the most of every opportunity"?

Your actions matter.

Every time you do something to bless someone else, you make a difference. Jesus illustrated the value of small, loving acts when he said:

> *And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward. (Matthew 10:42)*

Discussion question

6. What are some small actions that you could do that would make a difference?

Your words matter.

Every time you speak, you have the opportunity to bring life into a discussion, and you can be a blessing to others. I love these verses that illustrate the power of your words:

> *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)*
>
> *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)*

Discussion question

7. What are some things you could say today to someone that would make a difference?

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Some of your key purposes

Let's look at big purposes God has for you and for all believers:

You are created to know God.

A key purpose is to have an intimate relationship with God. You will read more about this at the end of today's lesson.

> *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)*

You are created for God's glory.

Another purpose in life is to glorify God. As you become more Christ-like, and as you worship God, you will bring joy to him and light to everyone who knows you.

> *Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made. (Isaiah 43:6-7)*

You are created to praise God.

Another purpose in life is to praise and worship God.

> *I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. (Psalm 86:12)*

You are created to grow the fruit of the Spirit.

Another purpose in life is to grow in character. The type of person you become is more important than your successes and failures in the world.

> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)*

You are created to spread the gospel.

Another purpose in life is to tell others about Jesus' love for them.

> *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. (Psalm 96:3)*
>
> *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20)*

You are created to use the gifts and talents God gave you.

Another purpose in life is to develop and use your gifts (spiritual giftings from God) and talents ("natural" abilities you were born with). Don't minimize your role. Whether you are a street sweeper or you own a large company, your role is important.

> *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:4-8)*

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> *On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it. (1 Corinthians 12:22-24)*

Don't minimize your role or compare yourself to someone else who seems to do a better job than you. If all the pastors and teachers in the world decided to stop trying because someone else did a better job, where would we be? What matters is that you are faithful. Use your talents and abilities to strengthen the body of Christ.

You are created to pray.

Even if you are bed-ridden or very limited in what you can do physically, you can pray. Your prayers are just as important—or more important—than your words and action.

> *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Colossians 4:2)*
>
> *Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)*
>
> *He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many. (2 Corinthians 1:10-11)*

Discussion question

8. Choose one of your key purposes that you will work on this week. Explain why you chose it and what you will do.

Do you know Jesus?

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

> *Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.*

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

Memory verse

> *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)*

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Homework – Day One

1. The Bible says that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). What does this verse mean?

2. Do you think your life matters? Why or why not?

3. Read Ephesians 4:29. Do you need to make any changes in what you say to people? If so, explain any changes you think you should make:

4. Do you agree one of your purposes is to grow the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)? Why or why not?

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5. Today's lesson says you are created for God's glory. What does that mean?

6. How often do you praise God during the day? Should you praise him more often? If so, how or when will you praise him?

7. Is it important to pray for others? Explain your answer:

8. How often do you pray for others?

9. Spend a few minutes now to pray silently for some other people.

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Day Two: Say "Yes" to God

As you read in Day 1, your life has a purpose. What you do matters. Today's question is, are you willing to say "yes" to God?

God uses "weak" people

If God calls you to do something, you may think, "Who me, God? Others are more qualified." You may be right. However, God uses weak people to accomplish his purposes.

> *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)*
>
> *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (2 Corinthians 4:7)*
>
> *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Corinthians 12:9)*

Discussion questions

1. Why does God use weak people to accomplish his purposes?
2. Does this mean God could use you? Why or why not?

Learn from two people who said "yes" to God

Both David and Mary are great examples of people who responded with confidence in God, although they were presented with seemingly impossible tasks.

David said "yes" to fighting Goliath, although Goliath was seemingly unbeatable.

The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:37)

Mary said yes when God said she would give birth, although she was a virgin.

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." (Luke 1:38)

Discussion question

3. What can you learn from these examples? Could God ever use you to do something? Explain your answer.

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Learn from three people who initially said "no" to God

David and Mary provide good examples, but the Bible also gives us examples of people who said "no" when God first called them. God overcame their excuses and used each of them to accomplish miracles.

Moses said "no" when God told him to speak to Pharaoh.

Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant, I am slow of speech and tongue … please send some-one else to do it." (Exodus 4:10, 13)

Gideon said "no" when God told him to save Israel.

"But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." (Judges 6:15)

Jeremiah said "no" when God called him to be a prophet.

"Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." (Jeremiah 1:6)

When these three people said "no" to God, God overcame their excuses and still used them. There are other stories in the Bible about people who did not get a second chance to do what God had told them to do. However, if they repented, they had opportunities to serve God on later occasions.

Discussion questions

4. Have you ever said "no" to God? Does that mean he will not give you any more assignments? Why or why not?
5. Have you asked God to forgive you for saying "no" to him? If you haven't, take a few minutes now to ask his forgiveness and to ask him to help you say "yes" the next time he gives you an assignment.

Identify, strengthen, and use your gifts and talents

God has given each of us gifts, talents, and abilities. Some are more public, some are more private. Yet each is important. Don't think you have nothing to offer. Never forget that God created you for a purpose.

Ask God to show you your gifts.

Let's look at the gifts Paul mentions in his letter to the Romans:

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:4-8)

There are other lists of gifts in the New Testament. A key list is found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

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Ask others what they think your gifts and talents are.

If you have mature Christian family members or friends, ask them what they think are your gifts and talents. They might see things in you that you don't see yourself.

Your friends' advice can be helpful, but be sure to pray and think about what they say, because sometimes friends are wrong.

Discussion question

6. Name one or two mature Christian friends you could ask to identify what they think your gifts and talents are.

Practice.

Sometimes a good way to identify your gifts and talents is to put yourself into positions where you can practice different roles. For example, you could join a choir, volunteer to help teach children's Sunday school, and help in an adult Bible study.

Discussion question

7. If you were going to put yourself into situations where you could practice different roles, what are some things you might try? Explain why you chose them.

Don't "hide" your gifts and talents.

In an effort to avoid pride, you might say you don't have any gifts or talents when you really do have them. Then you might not use your gifts and talents, feeling awkward about putting yourself forward.

That's not a good solution to pride. God gave you gifts and talents for a purpose. Use them.

Develop or strengthen your gifts and talents.

David killed Goliath using a sling and a stone. However, that wasn't the first time he used a sling. He had been a shepherd and had many opportunities to protect the sheep. In fact, he had killed a lion and a bear.

Make an effort to learn and improve skills. Practice them. Prepare for the times God wants to use you.

Discussion question

8. Is developing or strengthening your skills a sign that you don't trust God to do miracles? Why or why not?

Watch out for spiritual pride

You just read not to hide your gifts because you don't want to be prideful. However, as you use your gifts and talents, it's wise to watch out for pride. It's okay to acknowledge that you did something well. But be sure to give God the credit.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, gave us a good example of humility when God called her. She acknowledged her humble condition, yet she also acknowledged the role God had given her and glorified God.

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> *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name." (Luke 1:46-49)*

Paul also provided a good example of how you can be aware of your gifts, yet not be proud. He was aware that God called him to be an apostle, yet he wrote about it without any personal pride.

> *Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. (2 Corinthians 3:5)*

Discussion question

9. How can you avoid being prideful when God uses you?

Memory verse

> *Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. (2 Corinthians 3:5)*

Want to learn more?

Free online Bible study
You Have a Purpose
www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/you-have-purpose

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Homework – Day Two

1. God says his power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). What does that mean?

2. Why is it important to understand that God's power is made perfect in weakness?

3. Review the stories of David and Mary, two people who said "yes" to God. Choose one of them, then briefly describe how his or her example speaks to you personally:

4. What do you think are some of your talents or gifts? Explain why you listed each one:

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5. Ask some mature Christians what they think your gifts and talents are. Write their answers here:

6. What are some things you could do to improve your gifts or talents?

7. How can you avoid spiritual pride?

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Day Three: Make Every Day a Spiritual Adventure

God has called you to action, to make a difference in this world for him. When you understand that, life doesn't have to be boring or meaningless.

You have a choice about your attitude, about how you approach life. You can approach everything you do with prayer and a spirit of adventure—regardless of what you are doing.

Whether you are working around your home or teaching at church, look for ways God can use you to encourage others, bless others, or use your gifts. Throw yourself into the adventures God has for you, no matter what they are.

> *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. (Colossians 3:23)*
>
> *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

Discussion questions

1. How can you make working around home a spiritual adventure? What might that look like?
2. Imagine you are cleaning the bathroom. How could you do that "as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23)?

Pray for a spirit of adventure every morning

Ask God to help you make a difference each day. Ask him for opportunities to:

- Learn more about Jesus.
- Tell someone about Jesus.
- Use your talents or gifts.
- Encourage someone.
- Pray for someone.

Discussion questions

3. Would praying for a spirit of adventure in the morning change your attitude as you begin your day? Why or why not?
4. Do you want to want to make a plan to start every day with this prayer? If so, how will you remind yourself?

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Pray before going on an adventure

If I am asked to speak at a church or give a sermon, I often feel inadequate. Likewise, when I meet with certain people, I sometimes feel awkward or inadequate. However, my attitude changes when I pray. Here are my three key prayers:

1. Pray to get out of the way and let God work.

When I try to be "academic" or give a speech, I am boring. When I listen to the Holy Spirit and talk honestly, sharing from my heart, God speaks to others' hearts.

Discussion question

5. Do you think praying to get out of the way and let God work would help you? Why or why not?

2. Pray to love whomever you will see.

When I pray to love people, God helps me love. I become much less self-conscious and am better able to connect with people.

> *[God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. (Ephesians 3:20)*

Discussion question

6. Do you think praying to love whomever you see would help you? Why or why not?

3. Pray to walk in God's strength, not your own.

You might be able to accomplish some tasks using the natural abilities God gave you. However, you can't adequately preach the word of God, or do anything God calls you to do, in your own strength. You need to turn to God and walk in his strength, not yours.

Make Paul's prayer for the Ephesians your personal prayer:

> *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand on the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Ephesians 1:18-21)*

Discussion question

7. What is the difference between doing something in your strength and doing it in God's strength?

Make it an adventure to grow closer to God

Many people put a lot of time into physical activities or sports. That does a little good, but growing in godliness does a lot more good (1 Timothy 4:8). Take the time to grow closer to Christ.

> *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)*

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Pray regularly.

Prayer is a privilege, an opportunity to communicate with the Creator of the universe and the One who loves you the most.

> *"Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful." (Colossians 4:2)*

Read the Bible daily.

Ask God to help you approach Bible study as an adventure, as a way to know him better and to grow closer to him.

> *Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Joshua 1:8)*

Fellowship with other believers.

All Christians, collectively, form one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and Romans 12:4-5). We are connected and need each other. We need to go to church, and we also need to develop close, supportive friendships with other Christians.

The early church understood this. In Acts 2:46, we read that Christians met daily in the synagogue and ate together in their homes.

> *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another. (Hebrews 10:25)*

Discussion question

8. How can making it an adventure to grow closer to God change the way you approach praying, studying the Bible, and fellowshipping with other believers?

Use your gifts

There's a reason God has given you gifts, talents, and abilities—he expects you to develop and use them. No one is supposed to be a "spectator Christian." God expects you to contribute something to the body.

Use the talents or gifts God gave you in a ministry, such as ushering at church, working in a soup kitchen, helping teach a class at church, singing in the choir, helping in the church office, or helping in other ways.

> *What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. (1 Corinthians 14:26)*

Discussion question

9. Do you need to use your abilities, gifts, or talents more? If so, what are some things you could do?

Make the most of every opportunity

As you go through life, be prepared to respond to opportunities to help believers and non-believers. Some of the most exciting spiritual adventures are unplanned.

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Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Galatians 6:10)

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. (Colossians 4:5)

Respond to problems with a spirit of adventure

It can be thrilling and rewarding to live life as an adventure, but remember that problems often arise during adventures. When you encounter challenges, treat then as opportunities.

- If someone criticizes Christianity, see it as an opportunity to share the gospel.
- If others are mean to you, see it as an opportunity to demonstrate God's love to them.
- If you need to confront someone, see it as an opportunity to help him or her—with respect and love (Galatians 6:1).

Paul demonstrated a remarkable attitude when he went through severe difficulties. For example, when he was imprisoned, he wrote:

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. (Philippians 1:12-14)

Discussion questions

10. How do you normally respond to problems? How would you like to respond to problems?
11. Take a few minutes to pray, asking God to help you respond to problems in a positive way.

Memory verse

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. (Colossians 3:23)

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Homework – Day Three

1. What does it mean to live every day as a spiritual adventure?

2. Do you like the idea of making every day a spiritual adventure? Why or why not?

3. What is one thing you don't like to do around your home? How can you turn doing it into a spiritual adventure?

4. What does it mean to walk in God's strength, not your own?

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5. How can you make growing close to God a spiritual adventure, not just a duty?

6. What might make it difficult for you to make every day a spiritual adventure? How could you overcome this obstacle?

7. Describe an example of what "make the most of every opportunity" might look like in your life:

8. How can you respond to problems with a spirit of adventure?

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Day Four: Get Rid of Vision-Destroyers

God created you to do good works (Ephesians 2:10), but you may not be doing those works because of one or more "vision-destroyers."

A vision-destroyer is anything that gets in the way of you fulfilling God's vision for your life. Let's look at some common ones and how you can deal with them.

Do you feel guilty over past sins?

Do you have trouble believing God forgives you for your sins, or do you think your sins were so serious God won't use you?

If either of these describe you, I encourage you to bury this vision-destroyer.

If you accepted Jesus as your Savior, God forgave you for everything you have done, and his Spirit lives in you.

God forgave a murderer named Saul, changed Saul's name to Paul, and used him to tell countless people about Jesus. In fact, God used Paul to write much of the New Testament. Since God forgave Paul and then used him, you can be sure that God has plans for you too.

If you are thinking, "But I sinned after I became a believer," the Bible says if you confess, God will forgive you and purify you from all unrighteousness.

> *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

Believe God when he says you are forgiven, thank him for forgiving you, and stop wasting time feeling guilty. Start living with purpose.

Discussion question

1. Has guilt held you back from believing that God has a plan and purpose for your life? If so, are you willing to ask his forgiveness, accept his forgiveness, and then start living with purpose?

Are you "entangled" by sin?

You just read about accepting God's forgiveness for your sins, but what if you are still "entangled" by a sin? You will never be perfect, but if a life-dominating sin is controlling you, that will make it hard to fulfill God's vision for you. God can still use you when you are battling sin, but the sin can keep you from being as effective as you could be.

Declare war on the sin and do whatever is necessary to overcome it. Meet with your pastor, get involved in a Christian support group where you can be honest, dig into the Bible, pray a lot, and see a Christian counselor if you need more help.

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Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Discussion question

2. Are you battling a life-dominating sin that has harmed your ability to do what God wants you to do? What steps can you take to overcome this sin?

Do you feel condemned because of criticism or rejection?

Have you been severely criticized, rejected, or told you are a loser who won't amount to anything? If that describes you, let me encourage you to believe God, not anyone else. He says he loves you. He has a purpose for your life.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. (1 John 3:1)

Don't let others' words bring you down. Their criticism may be wrong, or it may be valid. If it is valid, ask God to forgive you. If their criticism isn't valid, pray for them and forgive them. In either case, move on. God has a purpose for your life.

Discussion questions

3. Are you going to believe what God said in 1 John 3:1, or are you going to believe negative things others have said? Explain your answer.
4. If others' words have deeply wounded you, take a few minutes to ask God to help you overcome those words. Also ask him to help you believe that he loves you and has a plan and purpose for your life.

Do you adequately prepare?

Have you tried to fulfill God's purpose without preparing? If you have not been developing your talents and gifts, or if you haven't prepared in other ways (such as studying the curriculum before teaching a Sunday school class), ask God to forgive you, then and make plans to prepare properly in the future.

Discussion question

5. What is one thing you are doing to minister to others? What sort of preparation should you do? Do you prepare the way you should?

Do you waste time?

Do you spend hours sitting around or doing relatively unimportant things? It's good to have some quiet, relaxing time, but if you aren't careful, these times can become vision-destroyers.

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How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man. (Proverbs 6:9-11)

As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed. (Proverbs 26:14)

Discussion question

6. Do you waste a lot of time? Are you lazy? If so, how can you get yourself to live with purpose?

Is entertainment or recreation too big a part of your life?

Many of us have hobbies or engage in various sports or leisure activities. There's nothing wrong with this when we stay balanced. God wants us to enjoy life.

But stay balanced. Don't allow entertainment, hobbies, and activities to consume your time. You are on the earth for a greater purpose than simply having fun. God wants us to enjoy ourselves, but he also warns us not to be "self-seeking" (Romans 2:8) and "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4).

Discussion questions

7. What do you do for entertainment, recreation, or fun?
8. Do you need to spend less time on these activities and more time on living with purpose? If so, what changes do you think you should make?

Do you hold back from doing something because of the fear of failure?

Don't be immobilized by the fear of failure. Decide to do something, do the best you can, and accept the reality that you will make mistakes or fail from time to time. Everybody does.

Discussion questions

9. Do you sometimes hold back from doing something because of the fear of failure? Explain your answer.
10. If you answered "yes," take a minute to pray for courage.

Memory verse

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)

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Notes

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Homework – Day Four

1. What is a vision destroyer?

2. Describe three examples of vision-destroyers:

3. What are the two greatest vision-destroyers in your life? Describe how they affect your walk with Christ:

4. How will you go about overcoming these two vision-destroyers?

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5. The Bible talks about "sin that so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:1-2). What does it mean by saying sin "entangles" us?

6. Is entertainment or recreation too big a part of your life? Explain your answer:

7. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). What does it mean to be purified from all unrighteousness?

8. Describe a vision-destroyer that you have overcome. How did you overcome it?

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Day Five: Review and Test (may be removed by leader)

Note to teachers and small group leaders

These questions can be used in day five as a review and/or test. Remove this page if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

True or false (circle one)

T F 1. Since God is in control of everything, our individual lives don't really matter.

T F 2. Your words matter.

T F 3. One of our key purposes is to pray.

T F 4. God usually chooses successful people to accomplish his purposes.

T F 5. It's good to have spiritual pride.

T F 6. Washing dishes can be a spiritual adventure.

T F 7. It's good to ask God to help you make a difference every day.

T F 8. Pastors are the only people qualified to tell others about Jesus.

T F 9. If you wear glasses, you don't have to worry about vision-destroyers.

T F 10. Wasting time is a vision-destroyer.

Short questions

1. What is the over-all theme of this book, *Living with Purpose*?

2. Describe someone you know who lives for God—with purpose:

3. Did you learn something about living with purpose that will change the way you live? Explain your answer:

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4. What are some key purposes for every Christian?

5. How can you make fellowshipping with other believers a spiritual adventure?

6. Describe a vision-destroyer in your life that you want to overcome. Also describe the steps you will take to overcome it:

Memory verses

1. Ephesians 2:10

2. Colossians 3:23

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Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

True or false

F 1. Since God is in control of everything, our individual lives don't really matter.

T 2. Your words matter.

T 3. One of our key purposes is to pray.

F 4. God usually chooses successful people to accomplish his purposes.

F 5. It's good to have spiritual pride.

T 6. Washing dishes can be a spiritual adventure.

T 7. It's good to ask God to help you make a difference every day.

F 8. Pastors are the only people qualified to tell others about Jesus.

F 9. If you wear glasses, you don't have to worry about vision-destroyers.

T 10. Wasting time is a vision-destroyer.

Memory verses

1. Ephesians 2:10

   For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

2. Colossians 3:23

   Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.

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About the Author

Doug Britton, Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist, has helped hundreds of thousands of people as a therapist, clinical director of a treatment center, seminar speaker, radio co-host, and author of over twenty books that show people how to apply God's truths in their daily lives.

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Books

Doug has written Bible-based books on many daily-living topics. Visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore.

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Seminars and retreats

Doug is the founder and president of LifeTree Institute and LifeTree Books. If you would like him or another member of the LifeTree team to speak in your church on any of the above topics, please visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com and click on the "Seminars" link.

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First Things First
Living by Grace

Living Free
Breaking Free (from Drugs and Alcohol)
Conquering Depression
Defeating Temptation
Healing Life's Hurts
Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
Six Keys to Personal Growth
Six Keys to Successful Relationships
Strengthening Your Marriage
Victory over Grumpiness, Irritation, & Anger
Who Do You Think You Are?

Marriage by the Book
Laying a Solid Foundation
Making Christ the Cornerstone
Encouraging Your Spouse
Extending Grace to Your Mate
Talking with Respect and Love
Improving Your Teamwork
Putting Money in its Place
Celebrating Intimacy and Romance

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