

Understanding God's purposes in 2008

As we step into 2008, it might be good to stop and think for a few minutes about God's plans for us over the coming year. Here are a few points that will help us do this in a way that will allow God to speak into our lives.

Isaiah 55: **10** *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, **11** so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

The first point that we should make is that **God's purposes are perfect, but not always what we expect.** The wise men looked for Jesus in the wrong place, in the King's palace. A perfectly natural thing to do when you're looking for a King, but God operates in the supernatural and we can count on Him to do things in ways that we could never think of. During the time of Jesus birth and ministry, everyone was looking for a political revolutionary to come and free them from the Romans and as a result didn't recognise Jesus for who He actually was. If we're not careful we can try and second guess what God's plans are and as a result miss His best for our lives. Simeon saw with the eyes of the Spirit that the young baby being brought into the temple was the chosen one. He kept his eyes, heart and mind open to anything that God wanted to do and say. So God was able to fulfill his promise to Simeon that he wouldn't die before seeing the Saviour (Luke 2). If we get pre-conceived ideas about how God will work out His purposes we can miss it, so, like Simeon let's stay open and alert to anything God may want to say to us.

Understand God's timing is also vital to understanding God's purposes for our lives. Sometimes God gives us the next two steps of our Journey and we get all excited and fill in the next 8 steps ourselves. By doing this we often apply our own time scales to what God has shown us and when it doesn't happen we get discouraged and begin to doubt that God had ever spoken to us in the first place. God takes us through seasons of preparation before we arrive at the final destination. Enjoy the place where you are at the moment and trust God to take care of getting you to the end.

The second point is that **God's purposes never fail!** That means that we don't have to be failures, or to live with a failure mentality. It doesn't matter what circumstances we were born or brought up in, just think of how Jesus was born, into a socially unacceptable situation. God has a plan for our lives that isn't subject to our level of education, our social background or any other natural factor. God's plan for our lives is subject only to His will and good pleasure. It's easy for us to live under the shadow of the things that have been said or done to us in the past. But we mustn't let the things of our past become part of who we are. God has a totally different view of who we are, as revealed in scripture and this is the reality that we should live in because God brings victory out of defeat. The cross looked like the biggest failure in history with the onlookers saying "He saved others, but can't save Himself", but ultimately the cross was the greatest victory in human history. God specializes in taking broken lives and turning them into something amazing that bring glory to His name.

The final point is that **God's purposes are personal.** God had each one of us in mind when he planned history. On the day Jesus stepped out of eternity and into time as a baby, God was thinking of every single one of us. God has a personal plan for each of us, nobody has been missed out or forgotten. So, we can rejoice in the knowledge that He is for us and wants to reveal His perfect plan for us. All we have to do is put ourselves in a position to listen and then act on what we hear. So the challenge at the end of 2007 is to get ready for God's purposes in 2008. Let's not allow the things of 2007 to hold us back in 2008.