

BUILDING THE WALLS OF YOUR LIFE — PART 1

Organisation is a bad word to some people, and “order” sounds non-spontaneous and boring. Yet Paul told the Colossians, “*I ... delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.*” [Col 2:5]

Under the rolling weight of a well-oiled church machine, the protesting cry is often heard, “The Church is an *organism* rather than an *organisation!*” It may be important to say this. But don’t let’s take it to the extreme that we become anti-organisation and disparage structure and order. As Ken Sumrall has often observed, “An organism without organisation is a jellyfish.” Structure and organisation are important, and order is essential.

We’ve been considering the inner life, and the inner life really is all about *internal order*.

The walls of Jerusalem were broken down bringing shame upon the nation. Nehemiah was motivated to remove the reproach by rebuilding the walls. The temple was already restored and the altar functioning, but it wasn’t enough—the *walls* had to be rebuilt. The walls speak of defence, definition, demarcation, and order.

Proverbs says, “*He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls.*” [25:28 AMP] In terms of internal order, we have to *build the walls of our lives*.

In the inner life, we have need of that defence, definition, demarcation and order. We need to be able to know what’s *inside* the “city” and what’s *outside*, and what the difference is. We need to be able to know what to permit, what to prevent and what to prioritise. Without walls, we’ll be ineffective and unproductive. And without walls, if you’re a caring type willing to expend yourself for others, people will unwittingly walk all over you. These walls are the difference between being a *servant* and a *doormat*. It’s essential to have personal order and structure—to build the walls of your life.

The Wall of Personal Purpose

We have a strong desire to be normal, but we weren’t created to be normal; we were created to be unique. Like snowflakes, no two of us are identical. Why then should we act like everyone else? We each have a destiny to fulfil—a personal purpose, mission and vision.

My *purpose* is *why I exist* in general terms. My *mission* is *what I’m to do*. And my *vision* is *how I do it*—what I see as the specific way I fulfil my mission. Many believers have not considered these questions. But those building the walls of their lives are doing so.

In 1868, William Ewart Gladstone was chopping wood when he learned that he was to be Prime Minister of Great Britain. He immediately announced, “My mission is to pacify Ireland.” In the event, this mission may not have been wholly successful, but it did express his sense of destiny and give him focus.

Jesus knew His mission. Amongst many other references, He told His disciples: “*My food... is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work*” [Jn 4:34]; and also said: “*For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me*” [Jn 5:36]; “*I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do*” [Jn 17:4]. On the Cross, He could say, “*It is finished*” [Jn 19:30]. There are many things He *didn’t* do: He didn’t live to old age; He didn’t heal the sick in Ephesus; He didn’t preach in Rome. But He did do the will of the Father for His life. He did what He was to do.

Charlie Brown’s method of archery was to shoot an arrow against the wall, then draw a target around it! He found it less demanding. Without clarity of purpose and mission, that’s

effectively what we do. We aim at *nothing*, or at *anything*, or at *everything*, and uncritically accept our efforts as valid. The old saying is: "Aim at nothing and you'll hit it every time." It's also fair to say, "aim at everything and you'll hit nothing", or at least you'll hit nothing with any great force. We need to know what we're going for, so that we can actually hit the target, or even know whether or not we've done so.

There are other walls to build. In the next issue we will look at the wall of outworked priority, and consider how our use of time is significant as regards order in the inner life. But for now it's about personal purpose.

What benefits does personal purpose bring?

Purpose processes possibilities

Personal purpose is not a *choice* we make—it's discovered in the context of God's purpose for the Church (see Body-Builder 6). In the light of that realisation we discern our *mission*—what it is that we're *sent* to do. Once this is known and clarified, it enables us to navigate the sea of possibilities in the direction of the destination set.

Speaking for myself, I have written down my personal mission statement and refer to it often. When faced with a new possibility or opportunity, I compare this with my mission statement to see if it aligns. If it does align, I know that I can embrace the new opportunity and it will enhance the mission. If it does not align, I can safely disregard the opportunity, knowing that it would dilute or distract from the mission. Without the mission statement, I would have no criterion of assessment. Purpose processes the possibilities.

Purpose provides the power of focus

A stream meandering gently through an idyllic mountain glade is a picture of peace and tranquillity. Yet if the stream passes through a narrow place, the flow of water there suddenly becomes more business-like. Similarly, a hosepipe may emit a modest trickle, until the nozzle is adjusted to a smaller aperture—then a powerful jet results. It's all about the effect of concentration—focus provides power. Again, a fallen leaf may be nestling in the gentle warmth of the autumn sunlight. Introduce a lens held at just the right angle, and the same gentle rays of the sun, now concentrated and focused, can incinerate it.

Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil for forty days. Through these temptations and His responses to them, Jesus established *who He was* and *how He was going to act*. He clarified and affirmed His purpose and mission. At the beginning of the time, He was "*full of the Holy Spirit*" (see Luke 4:1). After successfully dealing with every temptation, He is said to be "*in the power of the Spirit*" (Luke 4:14). The narrowing, concentrating and focusing effect of overcoming the temptations turned *fulness* into *power*.

Our potential can become reality in a similar way. Purpose enables us to lay aside the unnecessary and the unhelpful; to lay aside even the *good* in favour of the *best*. Purpose enables us to home in on the essentials and to live concentrated lives in power and effectiveness. Purpose provides the power of focus.

Purpose produces passion

Purpose motivates us and passion is the result. The fire of new creation life is already ignited, but purpose and vision keep us stirred and stoked. Without a vision of the future, life loses meaning, which leads to a loss of hope. A loss of hope results in many negative emotions, including a feeling of wasting life and a vague longing for something else.

But *with* hope and *with* vision—and with the mission and purpose that undergird that vision—there is a continual stoking of the fire within; a passion that keeps us moving forward. Purpose produces passion.

Take a moment to pause and review. It's common for Christians to be waiting for God to tell them what to do when *it's been given to them already*. We look for God's will concerning purpose and vision everywhere except within ourselves.

Take time to consider the following questions. Within the plan of God, do you see *why* you're here? Have you discerned and clarified *what* you're here to do? Can you see *how* specifically you're to do it?

Who are you? What do you see? What do you see for yourself? Then *do* it!

As you do, you'll be building the walls of your life.

George Alexander
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Note: All Bible quotations are NIV unless otherwise stated.