

Prestonwood Connection 2004

THE LIFE YOU WERE BORN TO GIVE, PART 1

Romans 12:1-2

Wednesday, September 8, 2004 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message *THE LIFE YOU WERE BORN TO GIVE* ] < 196 >

Janna Paulette is a sophomore at a..., Prestonwood Christian Academy and she and her family are a great blessing to the life and the ministry of our church and Janna thank you for coming and singing tonight, a..., the very heart of this message and of the things that we're going to be talking about in the days to come, that a..., who we are and all that we are is a..., for the love of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of you in this room tonight are well aware of the fact that in 1990 a business guru by the name of Steven Covey wrote a ground breaking best seller entitled, *The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People*. It's a book that received a lot of notoriety and acclaim. Since that time over 10,000,000 copies of that book have been distributed and I would venture to say many of you here have a copy or have read a copy of that book. But a..., in 1997, a number of years later a..., a much less well know book was written by a little bit of an or...an unorthodox Christian author, a man by the name of Chris Favery and Chris Favery is known as an author and also a radio talk-show host, but he wrote a work that I'm not even sure is still in print to be honest with you, I just had a copy of it in my library. But it was a book entitled, *The 77 Habits Of Highly Ineffective Christians*. Heh! [slight congregation laughter] I bought it for the title alone, but as I a..., bought the book and read the book I was fascinated with some of Chris Avery's insights, a..., some of his habits that he a..., pointed out were these:

*A...Base you faith solely on feelings and experience.*

*Make prayer occasional.*

*Major on the minors.*

*Be a hearer only.*

*Be thankless.*

*Be negative.*

*Cultivate worry.*

*Live in the future.*

*Live in the past.*

*Shun joy.*

*Believe sex is dirty.*

*Don't be real with God.*

And on and on goes his list of 77 habits of highly ineffective Christians. But habit number 11 is one that has stuck with me. Let me read it to you.

*Be a spiritual sponge.*

A sponge! I brought one with me tonight, a sponge. Listen to this:

*Spiritual sponges, like the hearers only, show up at every service, take notes on sermons, memorize verses, attend retreats, buy Christian books galore and subscribe to every Christian magazine and own every Christian devotional possible. Spiritual sponges know all the kings of the Old Testament in alphabetical order. Heh! [slight congregation laughter] Spiritual sponges know the diet of the prophets, how many calories are in a locust and ~~how many the ark...~~how much the ark would cost today if built with the original materials. Spiritual sponges desire the true trivia of the Word of God and unlike hearers, spiritual sponges are open to correction and will change sinful habits and behaviors in their lives. What spiritual sponge...sponges do not do is use their knowledge to help others. They will not teach a class. They will not present themselves for leadership in the church. They don't drive a bus or take the offering and most of all they will not engage anyone outside the church in meaningful conversation regardless of what they know. Call them shy. Call them intellectual. Call them introspective, just don't call on them to pray out loud during a church service. If you must learn more about the Bible in the Christian life, make sure you imitate the spiritual sponge and you will be filled with lots of knowledge, but empty of concern for others.*

Spiritual sponges, as Chris Favery so cleverly identifies the problem of the spiritual sponge, I couldn't help but realize that he's addressing an issue that is very near and dear to my heart as someone who engages a lot of time and effort and energy in preaching and teaching the Word of God. It also mattered to me as an individual believer, because I do not simply wanna be a person who is learning just for the sake of teaching. I always wanna be sure that my learning is for the sake of living and I believe that one of the greatest tendencies in our day is the tendency toward absorption without distribution and without expression. We have a lot of people who attend churches and church meetings and church gatherings and they've gotten all caught up in it and they're absorbing and absorbing and absorbing, but they're never distributing, they're never giving, they're never engaging. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever gotten a sponge wet and failed to wring it out? Do you know what happens to it after a few days? Anybody wanna tell me? Can we say it collectively? It begins to...[stink]...let's say that in one accord, "It stinks!" [slight congregation laughter] Thank you and do you know what starts happening in churches that are filled with spiritual sponges? Before long they start stinking, they quit becoming an aroma of praise to the grace of God and they begin to be places, palaces even, that are filled with an unbecoming smell of a life that is ever taking and a life that is never giving. Well, it is this matter and all of the matters related to it that I want to begin tonight to address from the very core text of the New Testament, the book of Romans and I want you to take your Bible tonight and to open it to the book of Romans, chapter 11, because we're gonna actually start right a..., down in the...in the...in the heart of this book and we're gonna look together at a concept tonight that I pray begins to invade your mind and your heart

and your life and will change who you are and what you are in the days to come. I love the book of Romans. It's been called the constitution of Christianity. If you really had to find a single text, a single book within all the books of the Bible that brought together all of the key doctrines of the Christian faith, they're really found in the book of Romans. Now certainly our doctrine is built on the whole of Scripture and the continuity and the integrity of the entirety of the Bible. But there is a sense in which the book of Romans brings into specific focus the work of God for us and the purpose of God through us and so we see that and we discover that in the book of Romans and Romans therefore is a book that really can be divided into 2 simple parts.

The first part is the part in Romans, chapters 1 through 11 that focuses on that which is doctrinal and that which is foundational, the truth, the evidence, the concepts, the precepts that all of us need to understand about who God is and what God has done for us and if you want a solid foundation for what it means to be a Christian and what it means to know God in a real and a personal way you find that described in Romans chapter 1 through Romans chapter 11 and so that's the whole first half of the book of Romans.

But the second half of the book of Romans, beginning in Romans chapter 12 and going through Romans chapter 16 is that which turns the page from being doctrine and foundation to being that which becomes practical and applicable, that which becomes my duty and that which begins to become a part of the life and the character that I live as a follower of Jesus Christ. Now the end of the doctrinal foundational section is all summarized in one all encompassing verse that is found at the end of Romans chapter 11. Let's read it together, Romans chapter 11 and verse 36. Romans chapter 11 and verse 36, let's read it out loud together:

*For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever...*

That wasn't very good. I know you've been workin, I know you've been busy, I know your minds been in a thousand places, but tonight I want you to say this with me with conviction, because this is what the Bible tells us about who God is, what God has done and what God's purpose is. Let's say it together one more time.

*For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

Good! Amen. It's all about God. If I could give you the summary of all of the doctrine from Romans chapter 1 through Romans chapter 11 in a simple statement it is this:

**IT'S NOT ABOUT ME, IT'S ALL ABOUT GOD.**

And there is nothing more fundamental in life than to come to the place where your perspective about what life is, what life means and what life

is about is a God centered perspective and a God focused mindset. God centered thinking is essential to each and to every one of us because that's why we are here, that's why things exist. It's all about God! It's not about me! That's why I'm excited about this new series that our pastor is beginning this weekend called, God Of Wonders. Knowing Him and making Him known, he says that he believes that this is the core issue of the church and of the culture today. Who is God? Can we know Him? What is He like? And so I think this is gonna to be a wonderful compliment as we consider who God is and what He is like and what God desires and what God expects of you and of me. Now Romans chapter 11, verse 36 gives us essentially **3 INSIGHTS ON LIFE**. It tells us that...

#1 **GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL THINGS.**

*For of Him...*

Everything has come from Him. Nothing was made, nothing exists that doesn't ultimately have its origin, its meaning, its existence, its creation in the creative work of God. God is the source of everything. But not only does the Bible say...

*For of Him...*

The Bible says...

*...through Him...*

Therefore **GOD IS THE SUSTAINER OF EVERYTHING**. If God, for just one minute, were to turn His back upon the planet earth and take His eye, as though it were, off of what's happening here it would just go into a million pieces. He holds it together. He holds everything together and keeps it in motion and keeps it moving towards His purpose, His plan and His ultimate destiny. So, #1 God is the source of everything. #2 God is the sustainer of everything...

*For of Him and through Him...*

And then the Bible says...

*...and to Him...*

Therefore **GOD IS THE SUMMIT OF EVERYTHING**. Everything is coming to Him. It came from Him to begin with. It is all coming back to Him in the end and therefore everything is ultimately about the glory of God. Life is not about me, life is about God! Now having seen that as the broad rush of 11 chapters telling us from the beginning who God is and what God has done, then Paul comes, the author of the book of Romans, led and driven by the Holy Spirit to give us this teaching. Paul comes to Romans chapter 12 and this is what he says, verse 1:

*I beseech you...I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,*

*that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

Here's what it's about, if He is the source of all things and He's the sustainer of all things and He's gonna be the summit of all things then it's time for you and time for me to get in line with His plan and purpose for us and therefore I am to begin to see my life as being lived for the purpose for which God has made me and Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2 become the hinge, the hinge from doctrine and foundation into the action of life and now I am begin to live out in life God's purpose and God's plan for me, my life agenda, my daily concern, all that I am is about God's purpose and God's plan. Therefore, I do not live my life even as a Christian to be a sponge. I live my life to be a steward, to be a steward of all that God had intended for me to be and all that God has given me that I can do for His glory. All of life is about stewardship. Now that may come as a surprise to you, because most of the time when you hear the word stewardship what do you immediately think about? It's okay, you can say it. Money, okay, yeah, exactly. We all think stewardship, oh yeah that's money. Heh, and frankly most people hear me say that tonight are thinking oh my goodness he starting a sermon series on Romans on money. Heh! Well, I'll get there, but that's not all I'm gonna talk about. [congregation laughter] I didn't want to disappoint you, [more laughter] but it is about the subject of stewardship and stewardship is coming to the place in life where I understand that because God is my source and God is my sustainer and God is my summit that stewardship of life means that I live every thing and every day for His purpose plan in glory. Here's what I'm trying to say to you, stewardship is not a giving thing, stewardship is a life thing. It's not just a money thing, it's a life thing that does involve the giving of your life and living life for the glory of God. You see that is a very important distinction and the reason that it is an important distinction is because far too many of us have bought into a mindset in the Christian life that the Christian life is all about getting from God and getting in life. I believe one of the primary reasons that so many Christians are frustrated, defeated, living with disappointment, living with struggles in life is because they've bought into this whole mindset that being a Christian is all about getting. If I can just get more knowledge and get more faith and get more experience, if I can just be a bigger sponge, if I can just hold more water, if I can just take more in. But you see ladies and gentlemen it's not about getting, the whole purpose of the Christian life is about giving. It's not how much more capacity I've got, it's how much more God has the total capacity of my life at His disposal, because I've opened myself and given myself to Him and I am now living my life to be given for His purpose. So if I can put it in a statement here's what it is.

**THE LIFE THAT YOU'VE BEEN BORN TO LIVE IS THE LIFE THAT YOU'VE BEEN BORN TO GIVE.** That's what it's all about from beginning to end, the life that you were born to live is a life that you were born to give and Paul says I urge you brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, that all that you are and all that you do in the body is to be to the glory of God. As long as you live your life focused on getting and

having and experiencing you will always feel inadequate, but when you begin to live your life to give your life to the purpose of the glory of God everything will change in you. That's why Paul says, I urge you brothers, I plead with you, I call upon you to give your body as a living sacrifice to God. Quit focusing ~~on giving...~~ on getting and start focusing on giving. Well there are 4 things that I want us to learn beginning tonight about this life stewardship, about the life that we've been born to give, because I believe in Romans 12:1 and 2, we get the big picture of what God expects and how God wants us to respond to Him and so I want us to look at it and I want us to begin to identify those concepts tonight so that the outcome of our life and our faith would be in accordance with what God's plan and God's purpose is for every one of us.

Now the first of those concepts about the life that we were born to give and this is so important is that we are to understand that the life that we are born to give and that we've been called to give is nothing more and nothing less than this, it is **RESPONDING TO GOD'S MERCY**. I am to respond to God's mercy. I do what I do, I give what I give because of what God has done and what God has given to me. Let me read it to you again from the Phillips Translation, I love this, it says:

*<sup>1</sup>With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I be...beg you my brothers as an act of intelligent worship to give Him your bodies as a living sacrifice, consecrated to Him and acceptable by Him. <sup>2</sup>Don't let the world squeeze you into it's own mold, but let God remake you so that you whole attitude of mind has changed. Thus you will prove and practice that ~~the will of God's good acceptable to Him and perfect...~~ that the will of God is good acceptable and perfect.*

You see God want us to open our eyes, that what life is about is responding to Him and responding to what He has done for us. The problem is many of us just do not have our eyes in the right place, our eyes are not wide open.

I heard about a young man who had lost his contact when he was out in the driveway playing basketball. He searched for it for awhile, went into the house and told his mom in a very dejected fashion, "Mom, I seem to have lost my contact." His mom said, "Why don't you go look for it again." And he went back out there, searched a few minutes and came back, but she being undaunted, walked out in that driveway and within just a matter of minutes came back in. She said, "Here's your contact." He said, "Mom, that's amazing." He said, "How did you do that?" She said, "We weren't looking for the same thing." She said, "You were looking for a piece of plastic." She said, "I was looking for \$150." [pause for congregation laughter] You see it all has to do with what you're lookin for and what you're lookin at in life and what your eyes are open to. Far too many people who call themselves Christians, live the Christian life out of guilt, out of frustration, our of a sense of compulsion. There are all kinds of things that motivate and drive believers and gather and to come to the source of their perspective, but for far too many of them, they've lost sight of the wonder of the mercy of God and that's why here in Romans

chapter 12 when Paul opens this passage of Scripture he says, therefore I urge you. Now wherever you've got a therefore in the Bible you have to stop and see what it's there for. Right? And the therefore certainly connects back to the immediate passage of Scripture Romans chapter 11 that talks about, beginning in, oh verse 33:

*<sup>33</sup>Oh, the depth of the and riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ... <sup>36</sup>For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things...*

Certainly it connects back to the end of chapter 11. But I believe that this therefore goes back further than that. I believe that the therefore that Paul comes to here is a therefore that goes all the way back to the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the book of Romans and I believe that beginning in Romans 1, he's just knockin it down, he's comin down the list. He's sayin listen if you will stop and think about what God has done for you and what God has accomplished then you're gonna think the only thing that I can do is to respond to Him with a total life sacrifice. Let's just take a rapid review of the book of Romans. I'm gonna give you the fastest sermon series on the book of Romans you've ever heard. I think, now pastor, I don't know, I don't remember what your last series was so I apologize if I overstated that in a...in a preacher fashion here, you know talking about that, but a..., let's just talk about a rapid review of the book of Romans.

**ROMANS CHAPTER 1**, tells us, beginning in verses 20 and 21, that **WE WERE CREATED BY GOD**. The whole thrust of Romans chapter 1 is that we are His by origination and by creation. Lister to Romans 1:20 and 21:

*<sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead so that we are without excuse, <sup>21</sup>because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Professing to be wise, they became fools.*

The Bible says, you wanna know what's wrong with the world? The world has rejected God as it's creator and though God created us for His design, His purpose, His glory, the world has rejected God and instead of becoming wise and intelligent we have become fools, because we'll believe anything if we don't believe in the truth about God. That's why it's important that we know Him, but we were created by God. Not only were we created by God, the Bible tells us in **ROMANS CHAPTER 2** and then going all the way to **ROMANS CHAPTER 3** that **WE HAVE BEEN CORRUPTED BY SIN**, that something has happened, something has gone wrong with mankind, because of his rejection of God and the Bible says in Romans 3 and verse 10:

*... "There is none righteous, no not one;*

That literally means, nobody is living according to the original specifications. For verse 23 says it in a universal fashion:

*for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,*

You see we've been corrupted by sin, but then that brings us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> thing that we find beginning in **ROMANS CHAPTER 3** and then going through **ROMANS CHAPTER 4**, in order to help us to see the darkness, in order to help us to understand the desperate nature of our condition God gave us His law and what the law does is something that is hard and harsh, but something that is very important, **WE ARE CONDEMNED BY THE LAW**. The law of God is a absolute standard of measure that simply proves externally what is true of all of us internally. Romans 3:19 and 20 says:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law there is the knowledge of sin.

Why did God give us the law? So that everyone of us could put our lives up next to it and say uh...oh I'm crooked too, uh...oh, I don't measure up also and that everyone would see their need and their desperation for the God who made them. We were created by God, we were corrupted by sin, we were condemned by the law, but listen to this, **WE WERE CALLED BY LOVE**. For **ROMANS CHAPTER 5, VERSE 8**, the very heart beat of the book of Romans says this:

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Even though we were sinners, even though we had turned our backs against God, even though we had walked away from Him in rebellion, God came calling, but not just with His voice, the voice of God took on human flesh and there became a face and we looked in, as though it were, to the very face of God and His name is Jesus and Jesus Christ came to fulfill the expression of the love of God for us and He gave His life on the cross for our sin. He is our sin bearer. He is our substitute. He is the satisfactory payment and therefore we have been called away from this corruption and condemnation by the voice of God's love, Jesus Christ, calling us to be reconciled to God. Therefore we're changed by faith. It's not by anything that we do. It's not by anything that we accomplish. It's not ridding ourselves of our sin, it's trusting in Christ and what He has done and that's why the Bible says in Romans 5:1:

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

It's by faith...it's by faith, for the just shall live by faith and you go to Romans chapter 4 and all the way through, through Romans chapter 10, what you read is the message and the expression of faith. That's why the Bible says that if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. It's all the work of grace and of faith. Therefore we're compelled by grace, the grace of God that has been shown to us and has

been revealed to us in the person of Christ, the grace of God to which we have responded, to believe and to call upon the name of the Lord has now become the compelling reason to live a life according to the original specifications. I don't wanna live that old life anymore. I don't wanna be the person I was anymore. That's why the Bible says: [Romans 5:20]

*Moreover the law enters that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,*

And right from that passage of Scripture Paul goes into Romans 6 and says:

What... < turn tape >

...sin that grace may abound, may it never be, but let us go on and live in grace in the power and the freedom of life that Jesus gives. I am now compelled by grace. I don't wanna be what I was any more. I wanna live for God's purpose. I want the life that I've been born to live, now to be the life that I am born to give and thank God it's not only the fact that grace is moving and working in me, but listen to this, I am being conformed by the Holy Spirit. God is doing a work in me to make me what He intended for me to be. The Bible says in Romans 8:28:

<sup>28</sup>And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, and to those who are called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, ~~that we might be the first...that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.~~

You see all of what God has done He has done in His grace and mercy and everything that sin has messed up Jesus has made right and He is making it right in you and in me and therefore when I stop to think of all that God has done for me then the compelling motivation of my life begins to be that I am driven to give my life, wide open and live my life wide open for Jesus Christ. I don't wanna hold back. I don't wanna drop down. The cross calls me to a total life commitment and that's stewardship. Stewardship happens when I begin to be motivated to live my life in every moment, in every day, in every circumstance and through every resource for God's purpose, His plan and His glory. That's really what it means to love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength. The motivation of the Christian life is love and yet we look out across the landscape of our own nation today, a nation that is greatly blessed by great churches and great spiritual visionaries and people of faith and missionary movements and yet it seems that in every community there are buildings and churches that have only the lingering vestiges of a testimony of yesteryear. There's no life, there's no power, there's no influence, there's no momentum; could it be that churches have ~~no momentum~~...no momentum because they have no motivation? They soaked, soaked and soaked until they soured and there's no longer momentum because there's no longer motivation and the starting point from living the life that you were born to live and making it the life that you were born to give is to become captivated again with an understanding and an

overwhelming sense of God's grace and His mercy for you. What motivates you in your Christian life? You see we can get motivated by so many different things, by what others think and say and expect of us, but my question is, what is motivating you?

I heard about a guy who has been a real problem for his dentist. He would make dental appointments but he would always be late and they could just count on the fact that anytime that this guy had an appointment he was gonna mess up their schedule for the day. Finally on one occasion his receptionists called and spoke to the guy and said a..., "I just wanna confirm your appointment today." And just like that he said, "That's great!" He said, "But listen I'm gonna be at least 15 maybe 15...15 minutes, maybe a half and hour late." He said, "That won't be a problem will it?" And the receptionists being very bright and very sharp said, "Oh, no, not at all." She said, "We just won't have any time to give you any anesthetic before we start to practice." [congregation laughter] She went on to report he arrived early that day. [more laughter] You see it's amazing what a little bit of motivation will do isn't it? Well, what's motivating you? Are you driven by a passion of love for Jesus Christ, responding to His love for you, understanding His mercy and His grace in your life? It's all about His love.

I told you before I a..., regularly read a devotional book called, *Daily With The King*, written by a guy by the name of Glen Evans. Don't know him, never met him, but I've been blessed by his book and a..., interestingly enough yesterday and today as I was preparing to speak on Romans 12:1 and 2 his devotional thoughts centered around Romans 12:1 and 2. That's why I've loved this book, it just seems that wherever I am it seems to connect with me and it's been an amazing thing. But I love what he had to say when he said:

*To spite His 2 strong claims upon me, creation and redemption, Jesus Christ still applies the personal appeal. I beg you brothers, in view of God's mercies to present your bodies to me. That amazes me Lord! A God who owns me twice, still begs for my love, loyalty and service. He pleads for my submission, not on the basis of His rights, but on the basis of His sufferings. God is all wise, He knows that the batterings of force will only harden and stiffen while appeals to mercy and love break down the hardest of wills and create the most lasting of commitments. Just as I am, Thy love unknown has broken every barrier down. So it does and so throughout the Bible those tender loving appeals ring out from a God who could easily blast His way to success. Thank you Lord for respecting me enough to win me by love and not by force.*

The love of God, calling you, calling me so that we will not simply live our lives to get more, but that we will live our lives to give.

Several years ago on the day before Thanksgiving a young single mother, abandoned a few months earlier by her husband was trying to deal with the holidays and with her 3 children and the breakdown of their family. Two of her children were sick and she was just struggling with the weight of all

of this upon her and to make matters worse, she realized that she needed to get some medicine and she opened her purse and found that she just had a couple of dollars and she really needed to try to make it all the way to the end of the month and she didn't know what she was gonna do. But as she stood there in this very dejected moment a telephone rang and it was a church secretary from a church that they used to attend. She called her by name and said, "You know, you've been on our hearts lately." And she said, "We've been praying for you and some of the people in the church have given me something to give to you." And just like that she said, "Well, I was just about to go out to the store so I'll just come by the church." She went by the church, she saw the secretary who warmly embraced her and then handed her an envelope and in that envelope were 2 grocery store gift certificates and she was just thrilled. She started weeping and crying and then saying thank you, she just in her heart said Lord I...I'm just so grateful for Your grace today and she went to the grocery store. She got the items that she needed, some medications and some other things and she was gathering herself together and went to the checkout counter and as she got there she handed these items to the grocery checkout person who rang them up for a total of \$14, but then who seemed to turn and to stand and to look at those certificates for a while and it was just long enough to be uncomfortable and she said, "I'm a...I'm a single mother and a..., my church gave me these to come and to use at the store and I just am trying to get some things that I need for my children." And the cashier turned around with tears in her eyes and said, "Oh that's fine." She said, "But could I ask you another question, do you have a turkey? Do you have any other traditional Thanksgiving things?" And she said, "Oh no!" She said, "But my children are sick and would probably not..." She said, "Listen, I want you to go to the back of the store, I want you to get anything and everything that you need for a traditional Thanksgiving meal." Well, she was reluctant, but she went back and she did it and she said she brought her cart right back up to the front and when she brought it back there to the front of the store that same cashier was beaming with a smile and she said, "You know what?" She said, "I'm a Christian." She said, "This morning I prayed that God would send somebody my way that I could help today." And she reached down in her purse, she took out a \$20 bill, she paid for the grocery items and handed the young lady the change. She said, "God bless you, I'll pray for you."

Now ladies and gentlemen I tell you, that is someone who's not a spiritual sponge, but who has begun to discover that the life that she has been born to live is the life that she is born to give and it's hard to know who got the greatest blessing that day. Respond to God's mercy.

But there's a 2<sup>nd</sup> thing that we have to do and that is that we have to **RECOGNIZE GOD'S PURPOSE**, but you'll have to come back next week if you want me to tell you about that. A spiritual sponge, a faithful steward.