

## THE POWER OF DIVINE PURPOSE

The pioneering research of Harvard sociologist Gordon Allport established a connection between our instinctive spiritual questing and the energy released through the Zeigarnik effect.

**ECHOING ZEIGARNIK, ALLPORT FOUND THAT GOALS THAT ARE NEVER QUITE FULFILLED ARE THE ONES BEST ABLE TO DIRECT ATTENTION, GUIDE CURRENT STRIVING AND MAINTAIN UNITY AND INTEGRATION IN THE INDIVIDUAL.**

Spiritual goals, according to Allport, pack the most Zeigarnik punch. Allport wrote,

“Because religious accomplishment is always incomplete, its cementing character in the personal life is therefore all the greater.”

**WE ARE DESIGNED TO LIVE AT OUR BEST AND FULLEST,**

with the clearest focus and highest sustained energy level as we participate in a big, unfinished task, in a story that is perpetually in motion, never complete but always unfolding, a story in which we are significant actors playing a vital role.

**GOD INVITES EACH OF US INTO JUST SUCH A STORY—**

His story, the ancient, cosmic story in which the human race is graciously offered important parts to play in partnership with Jesus and others of His followers. The divine meta-narrative includes the creation of the world, the tragic fall of humanity into sin, the redemption of the world and reversal of the fall in the death and resurrection of Christ, the cosmic battle between the risen Christ and the enemies of God, and the consummation of this present age and the final victory of Jesus at His return.

**GOD IS DAILY AT WORK TO MOVE THE STORY FORWARD IN ACCORD WITH HIS ETERNAL PLAN.**

The Psalmist wrote,

“But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations” (Psalm 33:11).

Over, under and behind history, God is moving history toward that Great Day when the story will reach completion, and all things will be summed up in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14).

Until that Day, Jesus is powerfully working to move the story line forward, to unfold the plot decade by decade, day by day, moment by moment, life by life, transforming individuals, communities, and eventually the entire world according to His eternal purpose.

The master story of God at work in the world packs the ultimate Zeigarnik effect. C. S. Lewis noted the spiritual and emotional power of the Zeigarnik effect (though he didn't call it this).

"It was when I was happiest that I longed most...The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing...to find the place where all the beauty came from."

This grand, cosmic story draws us in and sustains our interest as it locates us in the larger, unfinished story of God at work in the world to transform a fallen humanity and establish his eternal Kingdom.

The larger, unfinished story locates our personal story in its movement and plot, with a clear but always unfinished script, full of twists and turns, movement and tension

While the Bible clearly reveals the plot of the meta-narrative and its ending—Jesus wins—nevertheless,

the particulars of each individual story are revealed only day by day,

like the cliff hanger plot energized by the Zeigarnik effect. Theologian and writer J. I. Packer summed up the power of the biblical story to capture our attention and sustain our interest.

"What makes life worthwhile is having a big enough objective, something which catches the imagination and lays hold of our allegiance...what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God."

The biblical story keeps us engaged and energized over a lifetime. It won't let us go until our part in the larger story reaches a conclusion—which will only happen at the end of our life. And, of course the story flows into a sequel.

This life is just the introductory chapter, with remaining chapters to be written throughout eternity in the life to come.

## **ARE YOU CONNECTED ON A DAILY BASIS TO DIVINE PURPOSE?**

Resources: The Art of Virtue-Based Transformational Leadership provides a discussion on the importance of transcendent purpose, faith and hope to one's leadership. The book is available on this website.

Leadership in a Changing World: Virtue and Effective Leadership in the 21st Century, by this author, provides a more thorough exploration of the relevance of purpose, faith and hope to leadership effectiveness. The book, published by Palgrave-McMillan, will come out December 2014 and you will be able to purchase it on Amazon.com in both hardback and e-book formats. Dan Taylor's book Tell Me a Story provides a powerful discussion on the role that story plays in our personal lives and leadership. This book is also available on Amazon.com

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