



June 1, 2014

Gleanings

The Stages of Life



Gerald R. Chester, Ph.D.
President

Strategies@Work, LLC
Solutions That Transform

Services

Consulting
Planning
Training
Coaching

Affiliate Consultants

With this month's Gleanings, I conclude my presentation of Billy's story, which I have been sharing each month since January.

Every person's life has many stages. Each stage is congruent with God's meta-narrative. For example, let's look at Jesus' life. He was born and grew as a child (Luke 2). He then apprenticed as a carpenter under his earthly father's tutelage (Matthew 13:55). In time, he became known as the carpenter (Mark 6:3), which suggests he was an accomplished craftsman. Ultimately he became an itinerant teacher like no other—he taught with authority (Mark 1:21–22). Each of these stages prepared Jesus for his ultimate purpose in life: to die as the sacrifice for the sin of man (Matthew 20:28).

Just as Jesus' life had many stages, so also did Billy's. And as with Jesus' life, every stage of Billy's life was preparation for his ultimate work. His family was wealthy and influential but were only casual Christians—professing Christians who did not live as Christians. In time, Billy understood that casual Christians were not true Christians. Notwithstanding his immediate family's spiritual poverty, Billy was exposed to genuine Christianity through members of his extended family. In time, the seeds sown by his extended family would help bring Billy to Christ. But his immediate family was important because public officials typically come from the gentry and his immediate family was gentry.

College was the next stage of Billy's life, during which time he met a friend who helped him experience the life of elected public officials. This exhilarated Billy and emboldened him to pursue a career in public policy. Before completing college, he was elected to public office. Billy enjoyed great favor as a public official because of his charming personality and oratory skills. Furthermore, as a casual Christian gentry, he was the ideal public official in his day. Consequently, he rose to prominence quickly.

The next stage was a turning point for Billy. In the midst of a successful public career, he became a true Christian. Everything changed. Billy experienced a career conundrum. He was still gentry but he was no longer a casual Christian. He was a true Christian, whom casual Christians viewed as fanatics. Hence, Billy didn't know if he could continue in public office. With the help of godly spiritual fathers and a healthy Christian community, he was able to navigate his career crisis and began to see God's purpose for his life through his career as a public official. Specifically, he recognized two works that he was called to do.

The first work was to starkly articulate the difference between casual Christianity and real Christianity. He felt called to do this by writing *Real Christianity*, a book addressed to the people of his time. He completed this work when he was in his late thirties. The book demonstrated sound biblical thinking beyond Billy's years.

All previous stages prepared him for the final stage, his ultimate work. He was called to reform, in part, the very system that had elected him to public office.

In Billy's time, society was based on a caste system—royalty, gentry, commoners, and slaves. The royals were the kings and queens; the gentry was the privileged class who possessed wealth; the commoners were workers who controlled the slaves who had no rights or power.

The caste system was consistent with the worldview of casual Christianity, which did not regard people with any serious sense of dignity. As Billy learned in his study of Scripture, however, the worldview of true Christianity views each person with divinely ordained dignity and purpose. Therefore, a caste system is inconsistent with a God who is not a respecter of persons (Colossians 3:11 and Philemon 1:8–16).

The most egregious aspect of the caste system was the indignity of human slavery. This became



Free PodCasts
Click here to subscribe.

View online
Print



For info click here
Order from Amazon
Order from Barnes and Noble

the target of Billy's final stage of life. He was emboldened and envisioned to eradicate slavery. A very daunting task, which was extremely unpopular. There were threats made on his life and the lives of his family members, plus many heated debates.

The last thirty-five years of Billy's life were committed to the abolition of slavery in Great Britain. The battle was won in two phases. The first phase was a bill passed in 1807 by Parliament to abolish the slave trade. The second phase was to abolish slavery altogether. This phase was finally completed three days before Billy's death in 1833.

Billy ran his race (Hebrews 12) with perseverance and completed his assignment. Everything in his life—his family of origin, the seeds of real Christianity sown by his extended family, college relationships, his skills and abilities, his conversion to real Christianity, his spiritual fathers, and the covenant community of Christians—worked together to enable Billy to find and fulfill his life purpose.

Who was Billy? You may have guessed Billy's identity to be William Wilberforce and you would be correct. In physical stature he was a small man, but in significance he was a giant. What made him significant was not his wealth or even his influence; it was his obedience to God's call on his life. The greatest definition of success is to find and fulfill God's purpose for your life (John 17:3). Based on this definition, Billy was an enormous success.

Hopefully Billy's story has inspired you in many ways. To help synthesize your thoughts, consider a few key lessons from Billy's life.

1. *Trust God* (Proverbs 3:5–6). God always has a plan and is always working his plan. Many times Billy was confused and could not see how things were going to work out or even how they should work out, but he never gave up. He always trusted God.

2. *Develop a biblical worldview* (Romans 12:1–2; Colossians 2:1–10). To live well, you must have a correct worldview. The only complete, accurate, and correct worldview is a biblical worldview based on Christ. Billy was called to learn, align with, and articulate a biblical worldview personally and in the culture of his day. His labor as a public official was a venue for him to accomplish his work.

3. *Embrace spiritual fathers and mothers*. God uses spiritual parents to supplement natural parents (1 Thessalonians 2:7–12), that is, to fill in the gaps left by natural parents and to help heal us of hurts and wounds inflicted (generally unwittingly) by them. Billy embraced both John Wesley and John Newton as spiritual fathers. These men were valuable resources for guidance and encouragement. Without these men, Billy would probably have not continued in public life after he became a real Christian. And undoubtedly, he never could have written his book without their help.

4. *Live in covenant community*. A healthy community of believers is essential to enable Christians to grow and find their purpose (Hebrews 10:24–25). Billy's community lived together in a suburb of London called the Clapham Circle. It is here that Billy found daily refreshment and encouragement for his soul and guidance toward his destiny. To find and fulfill your life purpose will be a battle. You will need help from a Christian community.

I hope these lessons inspire you and help you see that you are alive for a reason. God has a plan for your life. This is what gives life meaning and significance.

May the Lord grant you grace to find and fulfill your life purpose. May you have faith to know that all the various stages of your life are being knit together by God to enable you to accomplish your divinely ordained life purpose—to run your race. And may the life of William Wilberforce inspire you to run your race with perseverance.

<http://StrategiesWork.com>
Gerald@StrategiesWork.com
972 473-8655 USA

Training from a Biblical Worldview

Helping You Find and Fulfill Your Life Purpose

Your Need

Training Venue

Information (click below)

Find Your Life Purpose	<i>Seminar:</i> Strategic Life Alignment	Sept 8 - Dec 8, 2014
	Prior Strategic Life Alignment Presentations	Recordings Available
	<i>Seminar and Simulcast:</i> Strategic Life Alignment Alumni Event	June 20–21, 2014, in Dallas, TX
	Prior Strategic Life Alignment Alumni Events	Recordings Available
Fulfill Your Life Purpose	<i>Seminar and Simulcast:</i> Business as Mission	Recording Available
	Prior Business Transformation Series Seminars/Webinars	Recordings Available