

# BAGGAGE & PURPOSE

*(walking across the stage with suitcases)* As you can see, I used to be loaded down with lots of baggage. I could barely walk.... Barely see straight... did not have a clue as to who I was, or what my purpose was on this earth. In fact, I did not believe I even had a purpose.

You know, the interesting thing about baggage is that as stressful and overwhelming and even destructive as it is, it also has some benefits.

For instance, did you know baggage is easy to hide behind. It keeps me safe from you ever knowing the real me. It keeps me protected from criticism, from rejection, even from having to take those risks that are required to do relationship...

Of course, with baggage in front of me, it's awfully difficult to see where I'm going. And it's pretty lonely too.... Isolated, sitting in my little corner of the world, surrounded by my baggage.

The worst part about carrying around all this baggage was that it had become my identity. I didn't know who I was, only what I carried around. Anger. Depression. Addictions. Resentments. Selfishness. Painful childhood. Shame. Guilt. People pleasing. Defeat. Codependency.

The trouble with baggage is that when it's your only identity, you have to do a lot to try to make it as presentable as possible. As long as everything looks pretty on the surface, no one will notice how bad it really is deep inside.

Except God notices.

He knows what's behind the cover-up.

David writes in Psalm 139,

*"I'm an open book to you;  
even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.  
You know when I leave and when I get back;  
I'm never out of your sight.  
You know everything I'm going to say  
before I start the first sentence....  
You know me inside and out."  
--Message Bible*

You see, the thing about God, is that He knows everything about us, and He is not content to leave us lugging around baggage. He loves us too much for that.

Dan Allender and Tremper Longman III, in their book, "The Cry of the Soul" express God's love in this way. They write, "God will not leave us in our superficiality or sullen despair. Nor will

*He allow our puny shields of anger to stall Him. He will not leave us alone. He pursues. He intrudes. He will use any and every means to do so.” (Allender & Longman, The Cry of the Soul, pg. 50).*

And He does this because He created you, and He did so with purpose.

He has a vision for your life, even if you do not.

He has an identity for you, so that there is not a need to haul around all those bags you’ve been carrying for all these years.

And He has a purpose for your life.

In Psalm 57, verses 1-3, David writes,

*I cry out to God Most High,  
to God who will fulfill his purpose for me.  
He will send help from heaven to save me,  
He will rescue me...  
My God will send forth his unfailing love and faithfulness  
--New Living Translation*

In Psalm 138:8 he again says,

*The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;  
your love, O LORD, endures forever.  
--New Living Translation*

God created you because He wanted you and He wanted a relationship with you. He gave you a personality that brought Him joy! He gifted you with talents and abilities that were meaningful to Him. These are all a part of His purpose, His vision, for your life.

But, perhaps you, like me, got run over by life..... and instead of being able to live from your true self, to be the person He created you to be..... life happened..... and one by one, the baggage started to pile up. Until eventually there’s barely even a hint of the real you.

But it doesn’t have to stay that way.

Paul writes in Romans 8:29,

*God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him.  
(The Message Bible)*

It’s God’s vision for your life, to make you more like the Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 1:8 tells us that our lives echo Christ’s life. And Jesus walked this life before you. And He lived life without

baggage. It says in Hebrews 4:15 That He experienced every kind of temptation and trouble that we experience, but He did not sin... He did not accumulate baggage.

And that's why He is the one who will help you get rid of yours.

Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30,

*"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light." (New Living Translation)*

You see, what God wants you to carry is not the negative baggage from the past that has defined you all these years, but a new identity, based on the heart Jesus gives -- His identity for you.

If you have accepted the Lord Jesus as your Savior and have a relationship with Him, here are just a few of the things which make up your new identity.

- You are adopted as his child (Ephesians 1:5)
- You are forgiven (Ephesians 1:8; Colossians 1:14)
- You have peace (Ephesians 2:14)
- You have access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 4:16)
- You can be strong & I have God's power (Ephesians 6:10)
- You are not alone (Hebrews 13:5)
- You are prayed for by Jesus Christ (John 17:20-23)
- You are victorious (I John 5:4)
- You are no longer condemned (Romans 8:1, 2)

It doesn't mean we live like that all the time, or even most of the time. But it means this is how God sees us. And it's what helps us keep our focus on His purpose for our lives.

When I feel anything BUT victorious, I remember God sees me as having victory, and that gives me courage to keep moving forward, in victory, even if I don't feel it. When someone hurts me and I don't feel like forgiving them, God reminds me that I am forgiven, and that motivates me to let go of my pride and resentment and forgive others.

He is at work in your life and in my life, to make us more and more like Jesus. That is His vision for you and for me.

Paul wrote in Philippians 2:13,

*"For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him." (New Living Translation)*

But when we are carrying around so many of our own bags, we don't have any room left to obey God, much less see the purpose He has for our lives. When we are so worried about what others

think, and about pleasing people, we don't even give a thought about pleasing Him, and even many times we give up on any kind of vision for our lives.

So how can you know God's purpose, His vision for you?

First, it takes letting go of control of all the baggage. Surrendering it all to Him even if you don't have a clue about the next step after that.

Next, it involves opening the door to letting Him show you the truth about your choices, and the truth about who He created you to be.

One of the most amazing things about God is that nothing is ever wasted with Him. He will use all your Experiences, all your desires and Passions, all your Talents and abilities, all your Personality with it's quirks and uniqueness..... and even all your Pain, to grow and transform you into the person He created you to be.

I love what Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6 -- *"There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears."* (The Message Bible)

God has started a great work in you. So may I ask you, What is keeping you from dropping your bags and letting Him take you on the journey of His purpose, His vision for you – completing His perfect work in your heart and in your life?

For me, as a Christian counselor, vision is about healing and recovery... helping people deal with all the baggage they are carrying around that is keeping them from living fulfilling, meaningful, joy-filled lives.

One of the reasons I am a counselor is because of my own journey of healing, the process of letting go of the baggage in my life.

It would be an honor for me to be able to help you drop some of your bags, and walk with you on your healing journey.

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