

## Four Keys to Successful Living (Part 1)

by Bayless Conley

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley

Hello, and I am glad that you have tuned me in. I want to spend the next few minutes with you sharing something that's really important. I want to talk about the four keys to successful living. About knowing your purpose. About pursuing peace by having passion and taking time to play. This is going to be really practical, and it's going to really help you.

Again, I want to thank you for joining me. Probably today and over the next broadcast, the next message that I bring, we're going to get through all of these keys to successful living. Pretty hard-pressed, you'd be hard-pressed to find someone that doesn't want to be successful. Now, a lot of people have different definitions for that, but I'd say just living a full life. Living a full life where you are fulfilling your purpose, where you have enough blessing to take care of yourself and to help someone else. You want to be successful in whatever it is that you do.

We're going to talk about finding and fulfilling your purpose. We're going to talk about having passion. We're going to talk about pursuing peace. We're going to talk about having time to play. If you're going to have a successful, well-rounded life, a life that's blessed and that is a blessing to others, you need to have all of these things functioning. I want to start with the first one today, about knowing your purpose. Did you know that you have a purpose? God didn't design you to just sort of float aimlessly through life, not knowing what you're supposed to do or what He's made you to do.

In fact, if you use something, to do something that it wasn't purposed for, there's going to be problems. I can take a wrench, and I can pound a nail in with it, and I might be able to get the nail in. I've got a heavy wrench, and I'm going to do it, but I'm probably going to damage the wrench, and I'm likely going to knock a hole in the wall or whatever I'm trying to pound that nail into. Yes, you can get the job done, but a wrench wasn't made to pound nails. A hammer was made to pound nails.

I have owned a number of different guitars in my life. Right now, I'm down to two. I have two guitars, and they're beautiful to play. I just basically do it for myself and the Lord. I sing, and I play, and I worship Him, and I do it in private. I could take one of those guitars, and I could dig a hole with it. I could use it as a shovel, and it's going to take a whole lot more effort than it should. It's going to be frustrating. I'm probably not going to get the hole very deep, and I am for sure going to damage the guitar. Yes, I can do it with a guitar, but that's not what the guitar was created for.

We are, as individuals, created for certain purposes. If we spend our life doing something that we weren't created for, well, it's going to bring damage to us, and we're not going to be nearly as effective as we should be. I want to read a verse to you. This is from Psalm 33, beginning in verses 13-15 NKJV. It says,

<sup>13</sup> The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men.

That means He sees you, and He sees me.

## Four Keys to Successful Living (Part 1)

<sup>14</sup> From the place of His dwelling He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; <sup>15</sup> He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.

You can't get your head around that, that God sees everyone all at once, but He does. You are not a faceless person in a crowd to Him. You are not some number on an endless list to Him. He knows you individually, and He knows you personally. He's looking at you right now. It says that, "As God looks on all the inhabitants of the earth," as He looks at me, as He looks upon you that, "He considers our works." But first, it says that, "He has fashioned our hearts individually." Meaning that God has wired me up individually. I am as unique as my fingerprints are. I'm not like anyone else. There may be some similarities, certainly, but there's only one Bayless Conley. God has fashioned my heart individually.

Then it says, "He considers my work." Meaning that my work, my profession, what I do with my life should flow out of that unique wiring of my heart. My purpose should come from the way that God has created me. God has fashioned your heart individually. Listen to me. God knows every nuance about you. He has made you unique, and out of that uniqueness, your work should flow. Your life pursuit should flow. It is just the way that God has made us. It's actually an amazing thing if you think about it.

Now, I have a friend, and it's a really interesting story. He, actually, is one of the most successful Christian producers on the planet. If I mention some of the "religious, Christian things" that he's done, they've had a bit of a global impact. The guy is just amazing at what he does. Well, he told a story once that he was at university. His first year in college, and I don't even recall what it was, but he had a major that he was going to pursue. He's got a roommate in his dorm room there, and he throws his rucksack down that's got his clothes and stuff, and a couple of old Super 8 Reel-to-Reels fell out. His new roommate said, "What's that?" He says, "Oh, my brother and I, when we were kids, we used to make these home movies. Those are just some of those home movies." I don't know why he brought them with him, but he had them.

His roommate said, "Well, you know what? I'm a film major, and if you'd like, I can teach you how to edit those." He said, "Really?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Just come with me," I think, the next day, "tomorrow over to the wing of the buildings where all the film students are. And I can show you how to edit your stuff." He said, "Great." Anyway, they go over there. They're editing these films, and the head of the film department, the professor that's teaching all these young, up-and-coming producers and people that want to work in the film industry, he notices what they're doing. And he stands behind them and watches over their shoulders, just a critical eye on what they're doing.

He watches them for a while, and then he says to my friend, "This stuff that you did, it's better than what most of my film students do. This is superior. When did you do it?" He says, "Well, years ago. My brother and I used to do this." He said, "If you don't mind," he said, "I would like to take this, your film, and show it to the film class and critique it and stir up some questions." He said, "Okay, as long as I can come." The professor said, "Sure."

The day came, the professor was going to show these homemade movies that the boys did to the film class and critique it. So, he starts showing and talking about things that they did right, "And did you notice this? Did you see that?" Then had an open floor, and people began to ask questions. A lot of people criticized, some people said they liked this, and other people said that. Just this very animated discussion happened all around the room, and my friend said it was an

## Four Keys to Successful Living (Part 1)

epiphany for him. He said, "If I could make films that cause people to think like this, that bring out dialogue, that can actually influence people," he said, "that's what I want to do with my life."

That day he changed his major and began studying film. Well, the rest is, as they say, history. He found out what his wiring was. And it can come like a flash out of the blue like that. Or it can come as just a steadily growing conviction, like the rising of the sun in the morning. Listen, however it comes, I just want you to know you do have a purpose. God has wired your heart individually. Your works should flow out of that.

Interesting. I was going back and forth with a friend day before yesterday. We're just texting. He happens to live in another country. He had sent me—it's a bit of a promotional thing for something that he's going to do. It actually had to do with getting some of the world's biggest stars to sing some traditional hymns, some hymns that have been around for, in some cases, hundreds of years. He talked about it. We went back and forth a little bit, and his final text to me was this. He said, "I was born for this." I would have to agree with him. Let me read to you from John's Gospel chapter one. This is about John the Baptist. It's fascinating. John 1:19-23 NKJV says,

<sup>19</sup> Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup> He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." <sup>21</sup> And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." <sup>22</sup> Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

Man, that's a profound question.

<sup>23</sup> He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the Lord," 'as the prophet Isaiah said."

Now, think about it. "Are you the Christ? No. Are you the prophet? No. Are you Elijah? No. Well, who are you? What do you say about yourself?" Listen, sometimes it's just as important to know who you're not as it is to know who you are.

I know who I am not. There's a lot of things that I can't do effectively. There's a lot of things I'm not gifted for. I suppose I could do them, but I'm going to be miserable doing them. I'm not going to find fulfillment doing them, but there are some things I am created for. There are some things I love to do. There are some things I am good at. And through those things that God has wired me up to do, I can be a blessing to other people. There are some things that you are not. Some things that you are not good at. Some things that you don't have that intuitive nature about, but there are other things you're just intuitive about them. They come easily to you, and you enjoy doing them.

John said, "Hey, I'll tell you who I am. I'm the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord as Isaiah had said." John knew who he was, and he didn't get that through some shortcut. He didn't get that by sitting down in a seminar. He spent quiet time alone with God out in the wilderness. Friend, there's no shortcuts. You just have to spend some time with God, and those things will become clear.

Now, whether you're a pastor, an evangelist, a businessman, a businesswoman, a health professional, an actor, or a musician, whatever, find out who you are. Find out who you're not.

## Four Keys to Successful Living (Part 1)

Find out who you are. You should be able to answer that question. They asked John, “All right, who are you? What do you say about yourself?” I’d just like to humbly ask you, what do you say about yourself? Who are you? Do you know who you’re not? Do you know who you are?

Another question that I think should be integrated with that one, and I’ll tell you where it comes from. I was sitting down with a man. We were enjoying a dinner together, somebody that I’d always wanted to meet. He had been a jungle missionary pilot for years and had worked in several Bible translation organizations, and he was just one of my heroes. I had the great privilege to finally meet him, and to this day, we’re dear friends. In our first meeting, when we were sitting down, he said, “Bayless, people often ask, and I often hear them say, ‘What’s my calling?’”

He said, “I think that’s a good question,” but he said, “Maybe a better question is this.” He said, “Why not ask the question, what is God doing? What is important to God? What are the important things on God’s agenda? What is God doing in the world today? Then ask yourself, once you answer that question, how can my gifts, how can who I am, how can what I do, how can that fit into what God’s doing?”

I think that’s brilliant. I know who I am, but how does that fit into the plan and the purpose of God? The truth is, God is always into redeeming humanity. He’s always into lifting people. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. Jesus said, “I came to seek and to save that which is lost.” The purpose of God is setting people free and bringing them into His family. His purpose is redemption. It’s touching people with the gospel. I think whatever we do, whether we work with our hands, whether we’re a voice coach, whatever it is, somehow what we do needs to bring influence into God’s Kingdom and needs to further the purpose of getting the gospel to lost humanity.

Whether that is directly, that you influence your students by speaking to them about Christ, inviting them to your church, using that God influence you have, or whether it’s that you are gifted to make money, you’re gifted in the business world, and then you use those monies to support world missions and to support the vision of your local church. It’s literally a sacred thing with you, but you’re using what you have to fit into God’s purposes. 1 Corinthians 9:26, and I want to read this from the Living Bible. The Apostle Paul said this,

<sup>26</sup> So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step.

“I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step.” God wants us to have purpose. Isn’t that a marvelous thing? Now, I want to read to you about Jesus. This is just an interesting little insight when it comes to purpose. It says in—let me see what verse it is. I’ve got this written down. This is from—let’s see, it is Luke 4:42-44 NKJV. It says this,

<sup>42</sup> Now when it was day, He (that is, Jesus) departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; <sup>43</sup> but He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.” <sup>44</sup> And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

Now, Jesus knew His purpose. He said, “I’ve got to go to these other cities. It’s God’s purpose for my life that I preach the gospel in these other cities. For this purpose, I have been sent.” Now, the people tried to keep Him from going. Now they were innocent in doing that. Who

## Four Keys to Successful Living (Part 1)

wouldn't want Jesus to stay where they are? Their motives may not have been bad, but what they were doing was to try and divert Him from His purpose.

Some people, even innocently, will try and keep you from your purpose. They'll say, "Hey, stay here. Don't venture out." Some don't venture out onto the river of purpose because of their desire for security, their desire for comfort, or due to fear of an unknown future, perhaps due to ignorance. I still remember a preacher that I greatly admired. He was an absolute pioneer. He went to regions of the world where no one else went and had some of the most astonishing results in sharing the gospel.

I remember him sharing a story one time. He said when he felt this call to travel and to preach as he had, and literally, he went into some of the most dangerous areas of the world by himself, and again, had phenomenal results. Like stuff that you read in some book about some swashbuckling adventure, that was his life. Just jaw-dropping things happen.

He told the story that when his father was older, said, "Son, I'm glad you're following the call of God for your life, and I want to lay hands on you and bless you." What a great thing it is and would be to have a father that would do that. Then he said his father shared this. He said, "Son, I was called to do what you're doing. God called me to preach, but I never did it. I never obeyed Him, but you don't have to make the same mistake as me. I've spent my life doing other things, but now, I encourage you, son, you obey God. I never did." Now, thank God for the father's blessing, but what a tragedy.

What a sad note. "I knew what God wanted me to do, but I never did it." Someone says, "Well, you think he's going to go to heaven?" Yes, he was a believer. I'm sure he'll go to heaven, but as far as the rewards that God had planned for him— Paul said that, "The crown of righteousness," he said, "It's waiting for me. I fought a good fight. I've finished my course. I've kept the faith; henceforth, there's laid up for me, the crown of righteousness. But not only for me but for all those that have loved His appearing."

Well, friend, a crown of righteousness is a crown of right living. It doesn't just refer to living right, morally; it's living God's way, it's walking God's way. A crown represents reward. It represents position. And yes salvation, it is absolutely 100% by grace. We do what we do by the grace of God. But we will all stand, the Scripture says, "Before the judgment seat of Christ." We, believers, will give an account of our life. We won't stand in that great white throne of judgment. The judgment we stand before, it has nothing to do with our salvation. That is signed, sealed, and delivered by the blood of Jesus.

When we put our trust in Him, then that is done. We will be judged according to our works, according to our obedience, according to our attitudes. I think about that man's father. He's going to lose his rewards. Yes, he's going to be saved. But reward, position, perhaps throughout eternity, I believe from studying the Scriptures that those rewards are eternal in nature. In the book of Revelation, Jesus talked about the fact that He was coming quickly and to hold fast. He made this interesting statement. He said, "Let no man take your crown."

Now, how can someone else take my crown? The only way they can take my crown is if I was disobedient and I didn't do the work God had called me to do, and God had to use someone else to do the work that I was called to do. That's the only way they're going to get my crown. I don't know. Maybe like the elders that worshiped the Lord and threw their crowns at His feet, maybe we will have the privilege to do that. To lay it all down at His feet and say, "Jesus, because of Your grace and Your glory and the sustaining power of Your Holy Spirit and Your

## Four Keys to Successful Living (Part 1)

goodness that I was able to do anything of worth in this life.” Man, to not have the privilege to do that. My friend, it pays to find out what you’ve been called to do and to do it. It’s interesting, in John 12, this is later on in Jesus’ life; in verse 27 NKJV, He said,

<sup>27</sup> “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.”

Now, this is later on during His earthly ministry, toward the end of His earthly ministry. Now, He’s talking about an hour or a season of purpose. He said, “For this purpose, I’ve come to this hour or to this particular time.” What’s He talking about? We just read down a few more verses in verses 32-33 NKJV. He said,

<sup>32</sup> “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” <sup>33</sup> This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

Now, Jesus is talking about another season or hour of purpose. Before He said, “My purpose is to preach the gospel in all these cities.” Now He said, “My purpose is to go to the cross and to pay the ultimate sacrifice for humanity.” There were different seasons of purpose.

When it comes to the purpose of God for our life, there are different seasons, different things are emphasized during different seasons of our life. Just by way of example, my wife and I founded Cottonwood Church in August of 1983. All right. Now, you may be watching this at any point in the future, but right now, as I’m speaking to you in your living room, your home, or wherever you happen to be watching, that hotel room, I don’t know, but that was 40 years ago. You know what? We gave it our all. We’re still at church every time the doors open, and I still probably do 25% of the preaching in the church.

I still travel and speak quite a bit. I spend a lot of my time writing, but it’s a different season for you. Our son, Harrison, now is the lead pastor, and he’s driving the vision and making the day-to-day calls, the things that we did. The overall purpose is the same. It’s still about reaching people with the Word of God. It’s still about bringing the good news to the lost and bringing freedom to the bound through the truth of God’s Word, but it’s a different season of purpose for us. Do you follow me? Ecclesiastes 3:1 NKJV says,

<sup>1</sup> To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.

There are seasons of purpose, and you should find yours. Here are some things as I close this, just some thoughts that’ll help you. First of all, where have you been fruitful? Answer these questions, and it’ll maybe help you get pointed in the right direction. Where have you been fruitful in your life? There are some things, I used the word earlier, that you’re just intuitive about. There are some people, they can look at an engine, and they just intuitively understand it. They can take it apart, put it back together. The rest of us stand there and say, “Look, can you just beat me with rods? That would be more pleasurable than to try and figure out this engine.” We don’t get it.

I have young preachers ask me all the time, “How do you put your messages together?” I honestly don’t have an answer. I can share some principles with them, but the truth is, it’s intuitive. Some of you working with children, you just have this intuitive nature about you. You understand kids; you’re a kid whisperer. There are certain things that we are just naturally fruitful at. Answer that question, where have you been fruitful?

## Four Keys to Successful Living (Part 1)

Secondly, where do you find fulfillment? What brings you fulfillment in your life? What I'm doing right now, this brings me great fulfillment because I'm cut out for this. I don't think God wants you to be like the guy that says, "Well, I hate my job. I hate driving there every day. I hate the drive home. I'm miserable, but I get paid really well, so I reckon I'll do this till the day I die." Yes, which is going to be at age 35, even though they don't bury you until age 70. You ought to find something to do. When God calls you to do something, there's great fulfillment in doing it.

Then I just want to ask you, where is your fire? What are you passionate about? What gets that inward fire going? What are you excited about? The Bible talks about Paul's spirit being stirred in him when he was, I believe, in Athens and saw the city wholly given to idolatry. What stirs your spirit? What ignites that fire within you? Then finally, what makes you furious? What makes you mad? Most generally, God gives us a gift to fix the things that make us mad.

Well, friend, I hope some of these thoughts have helped you, and you're just going to have to join me next time when we finish this. I've got so much more to say about living a successful life. Listen, it all starts with Jesus. If you have never given your life to Him, if you've never opened up your heart and put your trust in Him, I want to encourage you, do it now. Just say,

"Jesus, come into my life. I believe in You. I ask You to save me. Wash me clean from my sins."

Just talk to Him. He will meet you. He will wash you clean. He will give you a fresh start. Friend, you are loved by God, and He has a purpose for you. We'll see you next time.

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley