



# Noble Purpose: The Joy of Living a Meaningful Life

*William Damon*

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## **Noble Purpose: The Joy of Living a Meaningful Life** William Damon

This book describes the personal and spiritual benefits of living life in a way that matters, with an awareness that one's life can reflect a sense of higher purpose no matter what the circumstances. The book draws upon religious, philosophical, and literary writings to show how humans in many cultures and historical epochs have pursued noble purposes by answering God's call as each hears it.

Noble purpose can be pursued both in heroic acts and in everyday behavior. The book shows how ordinary people—teachers, business professionals, parents, citizens—can ennoble what they do by being mindful of its deepest meaning. It also points out that humility is a necessary virtue for those who pursue a noble purpose. Great heroes are bold, courageous, and sometimes audacious in their determination to succeed; but they are also humble in their awareness of their own limitations. Moreover, a person must never violate basic moral laws while pursuing a noble purpose—the means must be as moral as the ends.

Purpose brings coherence and satisfaction to people's lives, producing joy in good times and resilience in hard times. It also presents a paradox: hard work in service of noble purpose that transcends personal gain is a surer path to happiness than the self-indulgent pursuit of happiness for its own sake. The closer we come to God's purpose for us, the more satisfied our lives become.

From the inspiration and examples conveyed in this book, we learn that all individuals have the capacity to discover their own God-given abilities, to learn the world's need for the services they can provide, and to experience joy in serving society and God in their special ways. As theologian Frederick Buechner writes, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

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