

Introduction to free article.

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Focused Life¹

Comparative study of effective leaders who finished well led to the discovery of important strategic formation concepts.² The focused life was the all-embracing caption for these concepts.

- Definition A focused life is
- a life dedicated to exclusively carrying out God's unique purposes through it,
 - by identifying the focal issues of life purpose, major role, effective methodology, or ultimate contribution, which allows
 - an increasing prioritization of life's activities around the focal issues, and
 - results in a satisfying life of being and doing.

The 4 focal issues—life purpose, major role, effective methodology, or ultimate contribution—are discovered over a lifetime. These are defined and explained in Table 1.

Table 1. Focal Issues Defined

Focal Issue	Definition	Explanation
life purpose	A <u>life purpose</u> is a burden-like calling, a task or driving force or achievement, which motivates a leader to fulfill	Life purpose is usually closely related to destiny processing. God’s intervening activity leading to a sense of destiny gradually leads to an explicit identification of life purpose. This usually happens as follows (though timing can vary with accelerated cases or delayed cases): <u>During the 20s</u> , committal, call, character, and life purpose intimations are the focus of God’s shaping activity. <u>During the 30s</u> , basic life purpose forms up; this may be added to later or take on other major thrusts. <u>During the 40s</u> , One or more additional life purposes may be added or old ones clarified, modified and expanded but major role is the dominant focal issue

¹ This is an introductory article. For further details you may purchase other materials that give more detail. See the purchase section of this website. The core study for the findings given in this article is contained in Clinton’s **Focused Lives** and **Strategic Concepts That Clarify a Focused Life**. **Focused Lives** analyzed the lives of 8 spiritual giants over a time span of mid-1700s to late 1980s: Charles Simeon (1759-1836)—A Strategic Mentor; A.J. Gordon (1836-1895)—A Missionary- Minded Pastor; Samuel Logan Brengle (1860-1936)—Public Saint; G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945)—World class Bible Teacher; Robert Jaffray (1873-1945)—Missionary Pioneer; Robert C. McQuilkin (1886-1952)—Bible College Founder; Henrietta Mears—(1890-1963)—Recruiter of Leaders; L.E. Maxwell (1895-1984)—Missionary Trainer. **Strategic Concepts That Clarify a Focused Life** draws out findings from **Focused Lives** that can be applied to today’s leaders.

² Developmental analysis over a lifetime of a leader can be categorized into three types of formational activity: spiritual formation, ministerial formation, and strategic formation. Spiritual formation is that shaping activity in a leader’s life which is directed toward instilling godly character and developing inner life. Ministerial formation is that shaping activity in a leader’s life which is directed toward instilling leadership skills, leadership experience and developing giftedness for ministry. Strategic formation is that shaping activity in a leader’s life which is directed toward having that leader reach full potential and achieve a God-given destiny.

	<p>something or to see something done.</p>	<p>in this period. <u>During the 50s. & 60s</u>, if health continues well, life purpose is very firm. Major role is clear. Unique methodologies are used with great power. This is a key time for a focused life. In the <u>60+ years</u>, the major focus is on pressing on to the fulfillment of ultimate contributions. A further focus is on conserving the fruit of a lifetime.</p>
<p>Major Role</p>	<p>A <u>major role</u> is the official or unofficial position, or status/ platform, or leadership functions, or job description which basically describes what a leader does and which allows recognition by others and which uniquely fits who a leader is and lets that leader effectively accomplish life purpose(s).</p>	<p>A major role is made up of the base component and the functional component where, The base component provides: 1) the formal job description recognized by society and for which the leader gets paid; 2) status—positions with organizations either church or mission carry credibility which others recognize. This status is often needed in order to carry out functions. Traditional categories recognized include licensed, commissioned, ordained and various levels of official position (rector, bishop, archbishop; assistant pastor, associate pastor, senior pastor; intern, missionary, field superintendent, country leader, etc.); 3) logistics for ministry—home base out of which to operate; support—emotional, prayer, other resources; finances; 4) Tactical direction; the everyday basics. The Functional Component: 1) is the informal job actually done which has functions that the leader does to reflect giftedness and carry out life purpose achievements; some of these functions are described by the formal job description while others are informal and reflect giftedness and ministry beyond the described; 2) comprises the means for carrying out ministry insights and eventually effective methodologies; these are usually related tightly to giftedness and calling; preaching ministry, teaching ministry, personal work, administrative work, edification ministries, outreach ministries, etc.; 3) describes the scope or sphere of influence that is appropriate to the leader which may or may not be covered in the formal job description; 4) strategic direction; the long-term possibilities of the ministry.</p> <p>A major role usually forms up during the 40s. A leader will learn during the 20s and 30s those parts of role which enhance and block achievement of life purpose and reflect who the leader is. During the 40s one’s role is adapted to try to build on enhancing things and diminish the blocking things.</p>
<p>Effective Methodology</p>	<p><u>Effective methodology</u> refers to ministry insights which are used to effectively deliver some important ministry of the leader which enhances life purpose or moves toward ultimate contribution.</p>	<p>The heart of an effective methodology is a ministry insight. A ministry insight is some breakthrough a leader gets concerning how to personally do ministry well. All leaders have ministry insights. These break throughs will come all during ministry. We may get them in any of the age brackets. But it is in the latter age brackets [40-50 and 50-60] that we really realize what we have and how powerful they can be if we focus on them. It is in the years 50-60 that we should reflect back and conserve those major breakthrough insights that we have gained in the past by converting them into effective methodologies, that is, repeated, effective use of good ministry insights. In other words, we should use them to death—especially as we see their purpose in focusing our lives. In the 20s, the initial breakthroughs in how to do ministry usually involve use of giftedness with individuals or small groups. Frequently they have to do with how to present truth from God’s word in an effective manner. In the mid to late 20s and early 30s, further breakthroughs usually come and have to do with the importance of relationships and organizational structures through which we work. Conflict processing usually forces us to learn quickly. In the late 20s and early 30s, all kinds of ministry insights come as we further explore different roles and discover more of our giftedness. In the 40s, we begin to use some of the accumulated ministry</p>

		<p>insights repeatedly. They become effective methodologies. In the 50s and 60s, we get maximum benefit from effective methodologies. We reflect back and remember some used in the past. We organize our ministry around them. We exploit them.</p>
<p>Ultimate Contribution</p>	<p>An <u>ultimate contribution</u> is a lasting legacy of a Christian worker for which he or she is remembered and which furthers the cause of Christianity by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting standards for life and ministry, • impacting lives by enfoldng them in God's kingdom or developing them once in the kingdom, • serving as a stimulus for change which betters the world, • leaving behind an organization, institution, or movement that will further channel God's work, • the discovery of ideas, communication of them, or promotion of them so that they further God's work. 	<p>Leaders will leave behind unique contributions that flow out of who they are and what they do. But there are also some general categories of contributions that we have identified in research. <u>The ultimate contribution set</u> is the collection of ultimate contribution categories that a given leader will leave behind at the end of life. We have identified 12 types: saint (model life), stylistic practitioner (model ministry), mentor (personal ministry), public rhetorician (public oratory ministry), pioneer (opens new types of ministry), change person (helps correct things), artist (creative breakthroughs in ministry), founder (begins an organization), stabilizer (improves an organization), researcher (explores things for concepts underlying them), writer (produces literature about ideas researched), promoter (motivates people to use things and do things). <u>In the 20s</u>, some leaders happen upon an important need and as a result give their lives to meet that need. This is a <i>need-centered motivational pattern</i>. A person is drawn to a cause and gives his/her life to do something about that cause. The cause results in the discovery of an ultimate contribution that drives the leader. This is called the <i>discovery pattern</i> and is rare. Another pattern is the <u>destiny pattern</u>. This too may rarely occur in the 20s and more likely in the 30s. A leader has a mystical experience with God in which direction for all of life is given. That direction will naturally lead into what must be accomplished. This is a <i>divine-centered pattern</i>. A very few leaders get this early in or before leadership transition or in early provisional ministry. This is a rare pattern. A more normal pattern occurring throughout the 20s and 30s and early 40s is the <u>drift pattern</u>: A person is led in a step-by-step guidance fashion. There is no purposeful deliberate attempt to have an ultimate contribution. The person simply follows what he/she thinks is God's guidance. Each major guidance decision will probably lead to some new accomplishment that will be the focus of efforts until God gives guidance for the next phase. This is the usual pattern for most leaders. In the late 40s and early 50s some leaders, as they grow, begin to understand more about themselves and those leaders begin to <i>deliberately move</i> toward training or roles that will enhance development and focus efforts. In the focusing of efforts, the ultimate contribution(s) become clear. This is called the <u>deliberate pattern</u>. It is an analytical, logical pattern centering on assessment of a person and a meaningful life that will contribute.</p>

The end result of focused life study of an individual is a one to three page document called the Personal Life Mandate.

Definition A Personal Life Mandate is a one to three page length description, made up of several paragraphs, which give in essence a person's life time goals in terms of what is known of the focal issues (life purpose, major role, effective methodology, and ultimate contribution) and using language which gives further intents toward these issues as well as describing being and doing achievements in harmony with these issues.

The first several paragraphs usually describe the life purpose. The next several describe the major role. Following the major role paragraphs come those describing the effective methodologies and how those can be exploited to achieve life purpose. Finally comes a description (often tentative for younger leaders) of ultimate contributions (legacies) that are part of the lasting ministry of the leader.

Below is a short personal life mandate of a Biblical leader in the Old Testament during the Post-Kingdom Leadership Era. It is of Ezra, the Bible teacher, and most focused leader in the Old Testament.

Personal Life Mandate—Ezra the Priest/Teacher

Life Purpose—My life purpose is to teach the truths of Moses to God's people in exile in such a way as to bring about renewal—that is, worship of God, an understanding of His requirements on our lives, and response so that God's people live out His truth in their lives and thus honor God.

Major Role—I see my major role as four-fold: 1. As a priest with a heritage all the way back to Aaron I expect to have spiritual authority, first of all from this role. 2. In addition, as a teacher who exposes the truths of Moses both publicly and in small groups and for training of other teachers I expect to see changed lives individually and seeds of a renewal movement—because my teaching will impact. My teaching itself, done competently, will generate spiritual authority 3. As a trainer I will train others as specialists in explaining God's truths from Moses. 4. Change Agent for Renewal: As a conservative ministering to a people who have gone far away from God's truth I am concerned about renewal.

Effective Methodology: I have disciplined myself to study the law of Moses and become an expert in it. I have also found that I must model it myself. This approach has given me insights in how to communicate the truth to those not familiar at all with God's law. By knowing the law very well and by modeling it I can explain clearly and simply truth in terms the common people can understand. Frequently, I use a team approach to do this. I read publicly and then break the large crowds into smaller groups. My team will explain in the common tongues what I have read. I then form administrative teams to apply the truth in individual situations.

Ultimate Contribution: I want to leave behind me a remnant in Jerusalem people who are purified and following God. I will come alongside the civil leaders and support them as they attempt to follow God's orders to rebuild. I want to leave behind a trained group

of people who can read, study, and apply God's law and will train others in turn to keep the truth alive. We want to be a people prepared for God to use in the future. (Ultimate Contribution Set: Public Rhetorician, Mentor, Change Person, Stabilizer, Promoter).

The most focused leader in the New Testament church leadership era is Paul the Apostle. Below is given his personal life mandate.

Paul's Personal Life Mandate

My life **purpose** is to serve the risen Lord Jesus by witnessing to what he has shown me and will show me to Jews, Gentiles, and Kings. I know I am to be a part of expanding Jesus' work begun in Jerusalem. I will be the primary person who will contextualize truth into Gentile situations. I will take the Gospel to Gentiles, primarily where no one else has yet gone, and see them turn from the power of Satan, the Kingdom of Darkness, to the power of Christ, the Kingdom of Light, God's Kingdom. Occasionally, I will also speak truth into Jewish situations. I know I am destined to give my witness to Christ before high rulers.

I will primarily do this through the planting of churches and development of leaders to care for these churches. I recognize that my ministry is pioneer work and will become a model for many others. I will be an itinerant church planter and developer of leaders. From time-to-time I am prepared to be bi-vocational, providing some or all of my financial needs through my trade, tent making. I recognize that **my role** will include church planting via an apostolic/evangelistic ministry with power ministry to authenticate my work. I will also do leadership development work involving teaching and mentoring. Leadership training will be a dominant feature of my work.

I will use several **major methodologies** to break open a work. I will use a team oriented approach to doing apostolic work. I will always try to have one or more people with me in ministry. I will also try to have prayer teams backing my pioneer work. Where possible I will do mentoring with them—always attempting to train them toward their potential so they can do what I do. I will move along networks where ever I can. This includes contacts via people who will help give an initial credibility. If there are no known contacts, no networking then I will use the local Jewish community (preferably a synagogue) to attempt to get a hearing. I will identify those non-Jewish people who are worshipping as God fearers, that is, Gentile proselytes to the Jewish religion. From those who are converted I will form small pre-church communities, give them Christian teaching and eventually identify local leadership and install it in place. I will always seek to model before the people I am developing those ideas I am teaching them. I have found that personal ministry, face-to-face with individuals or small groups is the place where I work most effectively. Where there is no natural networks via contacts or no Jewish community I will use open air debates and power break throughs, trusting God to give an occasion to demonstrate His power in some kind of power encounter. In every case, I will always seek to ground people in God's truth and to establish leadership who can stabilize the Christian community and bring growth.

When life is all over I want to know that I have led a meaningful life that fulfilled my life purpose. That includes seeing some or all of the following achievements reached in part or whole. I want to model a saintly life, that is one who has known intimately Jesus. I want to have touched many lives through my personal relationships (mentoring). I want

to have pioneered breakthroughs in people coming to Christ and forming communities of witness in many different locales. I want to leave behind a body of writings which can help people understand their situations and bring growth both as individuals and churches. I want to have adapted Christian truth from its Jewish setting into the Gentile world. I want to leave behind many of my leadership values in a few good leaders who will pass them on. In short, I want my life to count. And I want it to continue to have impact after I have gone.

Conclusion

Focused Lives include some common elements such as,

- long term ministries in a major role crafted to fit the leader, or an expanding, changing role in a long term geographic locale, and/or use of a unique methodology to accomplish purposes which may include,
- a lifelong involvement of serving Christ to fulfill some specific destiny purpose, and/or
- a concentration on achieving certain important goals which leave behind legacies for the on-going work of Christ, and
- an importance on the Word of God for personal growth and ministry, and
- the shaping work of God to move these leaders toward their focus, all of which reflect insightful lessons and values helpful to present leaders.

In essence, we should remember two things as we think about focused lives and proactive decisions that lead to them.

1. The focused life is not so much a goal as it is the by-product of a goal. Our goal should be to obediently follow God and to seek to know and do His will. If that is our goal, we will see the focused life as a by product.
2. We can learn from these leaders who have gone on before us. It is right and fitting that we do so. So what we have learned about the focused life can be applied to our lives. When we do that we are simply applying the leadership mandate. Glance through it.

Remember your former leaders. Think back on how they lived and ministered. Imitate those excellent qualities you see in their lives. For Jesus Christ is the same today, as He was in the past and as He will be in the future. What He did for them He will do for you to inspire and enable your leadership. Hebrews 13:7,8 (Personal Interpretive Paraphrase)

May you especially see the last concept of the focused life come true for you.

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