**St. John’s Baptist Church Speech**

**Let the church say amen! Let the church say amen again!**



**Jump!**

(Change slide) Good morning Rev. Felton and the members of the St. John’s Baptist Church family! First, I would like to thank Ms. Felton for giving me the opportunity to speak to our children this morning. I’ve always enjoyed speaking to children, which I do on a daily basis at work. But, it is especially an honor and privilege to speak to the children of God as we have here in this church.

**Secondly, I want to thank my daughter, Farrah, for introducing me and for reading my biography this morning.**

If you can, please turn in your bibles to the scripture: (Exodus 9:16)

**(And those of you without bibles, I have the scripture up here on the screen)**

The scripture reads…

(Change slide) "But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth"

(Change slide) I would like to speak to you on the subject this morning on, “Jump”

Please bow your heads for a moment in Prayer:

-Dear heavenly father,

-Thank you for this day.

-Thank you for your grace and mercy.

-Thank you for blessing us, (oh Lord), You have done so much for us, and You keep on blessing us.

-God strengthen us and guide us, so that we can be more like you.

-Let us make the best of each and every day, and clear our minds so that we can hear from You.

-Continue to use us to do Your will. Continue to bless us so that we can be a blessing to others.

-Keep us strong so that we may help the weak...Keep us uplifted so that we may have words of encouragement for others.

-Forgive us this day for everything we have said, done or thought that was not pleasing to you.

-In Jesus' name we pray.  Amen!



(Change Slide) What do you want to be in life? (ask the children the question)

I didn’t began to think about the impact that finding your purpose in life had on young people until a few years ago when I was principal at Franklin high school. I asked my students at that time, “What do you want to be in life?” A few students rose up and said, a doctor, lawyer, etc., but one young man stood up and simply said, Dr. Berry, I want to find my purpose in life! That moment really struck me, and I will never forget it, because not only was this young man thinking about finding his purpose in life at a young age, but maybe this is what we need to teach more in education.

We are blessed that we are still in the land of the living and that we can find our purpose in life, our reason for living. For our graduates today, as you move on from one school to another, or into the world of work, I implore you to find your purpose in life.

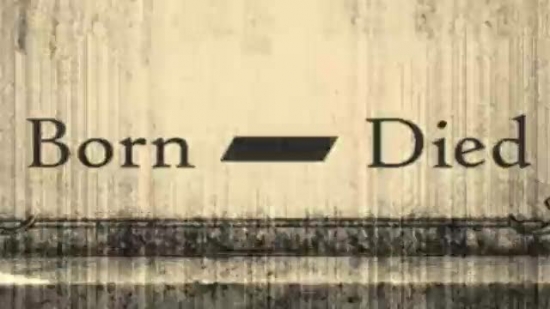
Life is not a dress rehearsal, this is the real deal.  What do you want your story to be?

What are the two most important days in your life? (pause)

How many said that it was the day you were born and the day you die? You could be right with that. Did anyone else think differently?

Others may say that “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why you were born.”

When it is our time to transition to heaven, we are not going to be judged by our birth day or the day when we leave this earth, we will be judged by this dash in the middle of these dates and what we did to make this world a better place while we lived. What are you doing with your dash?



Many of those who have transitioned on, lived a life where their dreams and purposes were unfulfilled.

You have to find the meaning and your purpose in life (we have to find out why we exist, what is your talent or gift that you can use to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ). Your purpose in life should include God, because God made you.

There is scripture in the bible that shows that God gave all of us different gifts, and what we receive in blessings are based on what we do with our gifts. In this story those persons with five and two talents doubled theirs, but the person with one talent felt sorry for himself since he only had one gift, and hid his talent instead of using it for good purpose. God says that our gifts are used to be given to someone else. If you don’t use your gifts, you will lose them. How are you using your gifts to help others?

As Christians, when you search deep enough, you will find that your purpose is tied to spreading the gospel. I would like to show you a quick video of what I mean..,

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Finding Your Meaning of Life - Inspirational Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAp0BTg2Trw

Most people go home at the end of the day from work feeling unfulfilled because they have not found their purpose.

Ask yourself, what are you good at doing? This is normally tied to your gift. Your gift is something that you can do better than most people without a lot of effort. Now share your thoughts with your neighbor.

Your talents and gifts that God has blessed you are tied to your purpose.

Now there is a difference between your talents and gifts. And until you find out what your gifts are, you are without direction, drifting around in life like “dust in the wind” without a purpose. Your talent is something like being a good lawyer, or, like my wife, being a good accountant, but your gift is something more. Your talent will allow you to have a wonderful career. Some say that your career is what you are paying for, but your calling is what you are made for, and your calling gift is what you are called for. Your calling which is your purpose is tied directly to your gift.

Your talents are your best abilities that you have nurtured through practice, personality, genetics, education and interest. You have worked to improve in these areas.

Your gifts are given to you. They are natural, something that you are born with.

Your Purpose or Calling is to being able to use your gift to spread the gospel.

For example, I have a talent in hitting a drum, I have a science talent, and I **used** to have a talent in playing sports until I got older (LOL).

But my gifts are in leadership, management, structure, and organization. I am gifted in the area of working with people and empowering them. It is innate that I don’t have to work on.

But my purpose or calling is being able to spread the word and goodness of God on my job through my dealings with children and adults.

Ask yourself, what is a talent you have? What is a gift you have? What is your purpose? Some of you may not be able to get past of knowing your talents…. (Think-pair-share activity)

(Change Slide)

If you are alive, there is a purpose for your life. Rick Warren

**The Hammer Story**

I would like to share the hammer story with you… A hammer is designed to hit nails. That's what it was created to do. Now imagine that the hammer never gets used. It just sits in the toolbox. The hammer doesn't care.



But now imagine that same hammer with a soul, a self-conscious. Days and days go by with him



remaining in the toolbox. He feels funny inside, but he's not sure exactly why. Something is missing, but he doesn't know what it is.

Then one day someone pulls him out of the toolbox and uses him to break some tree branches for the fireplace. The hammer is excited. Being held, being wielded, hitting the branches -- the hammer loves it. At the end of the day, though, he is still unfulfilled. Hitting the tree branches was fun, but it wasn't enough. Something is still missing.

In the days that follow, he's used often. He reshapes a hubcap, blasts through some sheet rock, knocks a table leg back into place. Still, he's left unfulfilled. So he longs for more action. He wants to be used as much as possible to knock things around, to break things, to blast things, to dent things. He figures that he just hasn't had enough of these events to satisfy him. More of the same, he believes, is the solution to his lack of fulfillment.



Then one day someone uses him on a nail. Suddenly, the lights come on in his soul! He now understands what he was truly designed for. He was meant to hit nails. All the other things he hit pale in comparison. Now he knows what his soul was searching for all along.

We are created in God's image for a relationship with him. Being in that relationship is the only thing that will ultimately satisfy our souls. Until we come to know God, we've had many wonderful experiences, but we haven't hit a nail. We've been used for some good purposes, but not the one we were ultimately designed for, not the one through which we will find the most fulfillment.

A relationship with God is the only thing that will quench our soul's longing.

Each of us has a purpose for which we were created. Our responsibility - and our joy - is to identify it.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to help you identify your purpose:

For what am I searching? All of us have a strong desire set in our hearts, something that speaks to our deepest thoughts and feelings, something that sets our souls on fire.

Why was I created? Think about the unique mix of abilities you have, the resources available to you, your own personal history, and the opportunities around you.

Do I believe in my potential? No one can consistently act in a manner inconsistent with the way he sees himself.

When do I start? The answer to that question is "NOW." -John Maxwell

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It takes some work to find your purpose, and I didn’t find my purpose until fairly recently. Sometimes in life you have to take a leap of faith to find your purpose. For example, The other day I was surfing the internet, and I came across a Steve Harvey video clipping from Family Feud. This video was not the actual show, but a taping between the TV shows, he said something that really struck me. You see I knew all about the importance of taking chances in life, and taking risks to find your purpose, but he illustrated it in a way that I had never heard before. He said that if you want to find your gifts, which are tied to your purpose, then you have to take risks and jump.

He said that “Every successful person in this world has jumped. Eventually, you are going to have to jump. You cannot just exist in this life. You have got to try to live. If you are waking up thinking that there has to more to your life than what I am experiencing, then there probably is, But to get to living that life, you have to jump”

He went on to explain why he called it jumping, he said, “God, when He created all of us, He gave every last one of us a gift at birth. He never created a soul without endowing them with a gift,” he added.

These gifts he stated are more than how fast you can run, how well you can sing, dance, and so on. But he said that there are more gifts such as teaching, solving math problems, networking, cooking, and so on. These are the things you are gifted at and what you love to do.

He stated that when you are standing on the cliff of life and you see people sailing on by you and you are still just standing there, maybe those people have discovered their gift, and is living in their gift.

Proverbs 18:16-A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men.

He said that if you don’t use your gifts, your education will only take you so far. And the only way you can use your gift is that you have to jump. When you jump, the gifts that you have are tucked away on your back. They act like a parachute, and it will allow you to soar. If you don’t ever use your gifts, they will remain tucked away, and you will just go to work everyday, and not live.

He went on to say that when you first jump there will be some problems, because your parachute may not open the right way and you may fall and hit the ground. You may also get some cuts and bruises from the fall. But eventually, the parachute has to open when you get back on that cliff and jump again. God will pull you through.

He said that you can play it safe, and deal with out the cuts and bruises by remaining on the cliff. But if you don’t jump, your parachute will never open.

The only way to get to that abundant life is to jump, and take a chance.

Do yourself a favor. Go see what God can really do. God will hold you up, He is not going to let you fall. He didn’t bring you this far to let you fall,” he said.

“Do yourself a favor man, before you leave this world, before you die, jump. Just jump one time. Just jump.”

There is a scripture, John 10:10 when Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”—a complete life full of purpose.

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As I stated earlier, there was one moment in my life where I had to jump. You see, a couple of years ago I had to make that jump in life to do what I felt God led me to do. I was the principal at Hopewell High School we were fully accredited and I was doing well, but I got a call from the Superintendent in Sussex who asked me to apply for the position of the Director of Instruction. The position was something that I knew would be good for me professionally, because it would help gain central office experience, but I knew that I would lose money when looking at it from an income perspective. So I spoke to my wife and took a chance and jumped. That jumped paid off, because it allowed me to make another jump at being the superintendent of a school division, which is the highest level of a position that you can get in a school division. That being said, I am not through jumping. There will be more jumps that I will take in years to come.

I implore you step out on the edge and be ready to jump and take a risk. If you don’t take risks, you will never know if you can fly or know what special things you can do.

If you want to be successful at finding your purpose, you have to take risks. If you want to be better than average in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you have to get out of the average comfort zone.

God will protect you as you take initiatives or risks that are pleasing to him. He will keep you safe

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"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."  Ephesians 2:10

Nothing in life can take the place of knowing your purpose. If you don't try to discover your purpose, you're likely to spend your life doing the wrong things. Our responsibility and our joy in this world is tied to identifying that purpose!

Today I want to talk about six ways to discover your life’s purpose:

1. **Find out what makes you smile?** What brings you joy?  It’s okay if you don’t know, just keep on living and looking until you find out. It is probably something you would do for free. Rely on your experience - The only way to know what makes you smile is to try what seems right and learn from your failures and successes. When you discover what you were made for, your heart will sing!
2. **What are you passionate about?** What do you love? Passion is a key to your purpose; it’s a sign of your purpose.  Discover your passion and it will be one step in the direction of discovering your purpose. Find your passion: What do you enjoy? What do you love about yourself? What would you do if money was not a concern in your life? What do you desire and hunger for. All of us have a strong desire set in our hearts, something that speaks to our deepest thoughts and feelings, something that sets our souls on fire.
3. **Find what are your gifts?** What are your abilities and what are you good at doing with little effort.

Romans 12:6-8 (NIV)"If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."  You want to discover those gifts that you have; these are the gifts where you can have the greatest impact. If you do not recognize what they are, ask those who are close to you. It may be those things that people always complement you on that you may not know are your gifts. It isn't what to have that counts... It's what you do with what you have.

1. **What are your opportunities?**  Your opportunity is to see a specific place where we can make a difference. This has to do with timing. As you evolve, you want to grow out of your comfort zone, but never out of your gift zone (meaning you want to stretch yourself at those things you are good at, but not venture into those things you are not good at)- John Maxwell. Think about the unique mix of abilities you have, the resources available to you, your own personal history, and the opportunities around you.
2. **What are your responsibilities?** What does the world need? Our responsibility as Christians is to primarily give and not to get. Share. Do not just use your power, intellect, and influence for personal gain. But, use your blessings to help others. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:48) Christians must live by higher standards than the rest of the world. This is because we strive to be like God, to make us qualified for ministry, to guarantee God's blessing on our life, and to receive God's reward for faithfulness. Those who choose to pursue life at God's higher standard:

* Adopt godly values.
* Care for the interests of others.
* Live with integrity.
* Keep their word.
* Develop their gifts and potential.
* Pass on to others what they have received.

Too many people are ready to assert their rights, but not to assume their responsibilities. Richard L. Evans, in his book An Open Road, said, "It is priceless to find a person who will take responsibility . . . to know when someone has accepted an assignment that it will be effectively, conscientiously completed. But when half-finished assignments keep coming back-to check on, to verify, to edit, to interrupt thought, and to take repeated attention-obviously someone has failed to follow the doctrine of completed work." –John Maxwell

1. **What are you praying for?** Pray and ask God to reveal your purpose to you. Prayer is a statement of our dependence on God. Prayer is a confirmation of things we don’t know, what we don’t understand, cannot solve, and some things that are bigger than us. Since God is our creator, we must go to him to for peace, security, strength and to find our purpose. Remember that God is in control!

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Most successful people in the world ALL know their why and they know what direction their boat is sailing in. They all have a very clear purpose, a very clear vision. For what they want to accomplish, what they want to achieve, and what they want to contribute to other people.

Once that sweet spot is identified you won't have a job or even a career. You'll have a life of purpose.

In closing, discovering your purpose happens in different ways. Some see it in a sudden flash. For others, it comes more gradually: Stepping outside social norms or recovering from tragedy or connecting with those less well-off.  Then there are people who have always known what to do, either through family influence, passion, or instinct.

Finding and clarifying your life purpose will help you move with greater focus and clarity every day of your life. Especially in these challenging times, setting clear intentions and developing and refining your life purpose can make it much easier to navigate stormy waters.

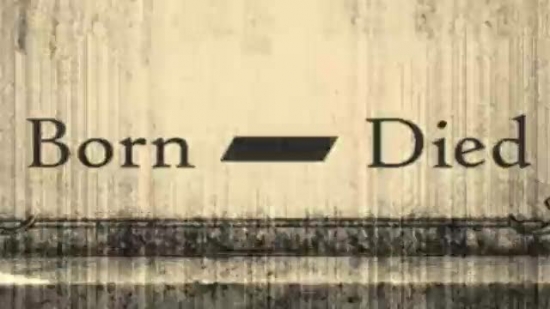
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Your life has a purpose, your story is important, your dreams count, your voice matters, and you were born to make a difference in society.

Consider the following regarding having a sense of purpose:

* A purpose will motivate you.
* A purpose will keep your priorities straight.
* A purpose will develop your potential.
* A purpose will bring you the power to live in the present.
* A purpose will help you evaluate your progress. -John Maxwell

So I ask you again, what are you doing with your dash?



Whatever you do, never drift from your mission in life of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ , and leaving your mark wherever you go. Having a purpose is being able to matter, to count, to stand for something, to have made a difference that you lived at all.

George Washington Carver, the famous African American Scientist left his mark, and he said before he passed on that “No individual has any right to come into the world and go out of it without leaving behind him distinct and legitimate reasons for having passed through it.”

Graduates, children and adults, live a purpose driven life!

The key is to find your purpose and help others while you're pursuing it. As entertainer Danny Thomas said: "All of us are born for a reason, but all of us don't discover why. Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others." – John Maxwell

The meaning of life is to find your gift, the purpose of your life is to give it away. Pablo Picaso