

# The Middle of the Book

by Vance Havner

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*Vance Havner's sermon emphasizes understanding our current struggles within the context of God's overarching purpose, which unfolds across three chapters of creation, redemption, and ultimate restoration.*

**Duration:** 11:37

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1, Genesis 3:1-6, John 1:1-3, John 3:3, Romans 8:22, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, Hebrews 9:22

**Topics:** "Word Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that God has a definite purpose from the beginning of creation, as recorded in the Bible. The purpose of God is divided into three chapters: the first chapter includes the creation of everything and the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. The second chapter begins after the fall and continues until the return of Jesus Christ, focusing on God's plan of redemption through his chosen people, Israel, and culminating in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The speaker encourages believers to align themselves with God's purpose and trust that even difficult circumstances can contribute to the fulfillment of that purpose.

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## Transcript

The sentimental, mccobberish philosophy that everything will turn out all right anyway. God had something definite in mind from the beginning, and the Bible records his story within history. If we understood better his objective from the start, we would know better how to get with it and live within it.

Too often God is out to do one thing, and we're up to something else. When we become part of his purpose and love him, then all things, including things not even good in themselves, can be made to contribute to the fulfillment of that purpose. The purpose of God is a book with three chapters.

The first began with creation and extends to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. The second begins after that fall and continues until the return of Jesus Christ. The third begins with his coming again and never ends through all eternity.

We're living in the second chapter, and sometimes it seems as though that chapter will never end. One thing we must understand with perfect certainty that we're in the second chapter of this book, or else we can put nothing together and may even lose our sanity in times like these. The middle of a book is no place from which to judge the whole book.

Most of our misery and confusion arises from trying to sum up the whole of God's purpose when we're only in the middle of this drama. It is neither the time or place to arrive at conclusions. Much of it makes no sense now, but that does not mean that it never will make sense.

Because it makes no sense to us does not mean that it doesn't make sense to God. These three chapters may be called the original purpose of God, the present purpose of God, and the ultimate purpose of God. The Bible does not begin with an argument to prove the existence of God.

It begins with an affirmation in the beginning God, and that is where we must begin. The story of God's purpose really has no beginning, for God has no beginning and has no end, for eternity has no end. The Bible does not explain how evil started.

It presents the serpent in the Garden of Eden. We need not waste our time trying to reason out the existence of God or the origin of evil, but accept them as facts and move on from there. God does not tell us all we might like to know, but he tells us all we need to know for the outworking of his purpose.

The first chapter begins with God creating everything in an ideal state, and the human race starting out in innocence. What things would be like today if that had continued, we can only imagine, that we would be living in a world without sin and sickness, disease and death, in some respects like angels, but not angels. That's not the way it turned out for Adam and Eve.

They ate us out of house and home. We lost paradise, and God's original purpose was spoiled by sin temporarily, but not forever. Why didn't God keep us in a state of innocence? He gave us the power of choice, for otherwise we would have been robots, zombies.

But what a fearful responsibility came with that power. We could choose evil, and for centuries the world has wallowed in agony and grief, sin, sorrow and shame, but we could also choose good, and for centuries there's been beauty and great art and music, noble living and saints. It had to be the power to choose either if we were to be free agents.

For all its horrors and heartaches, this present world is a good place in which to develop character. You cannot sharpen an axe on a cake of butter. God sometimes sharpens his saints on the devil's grindstone.

But Adam and Eve could not stay in Eden after they'd sinned, lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever. Man in his natural condition lost paradise. Sin must be dealt with, and a new race begun, born again by faith in Jesus Christ, the Adam of that new race.

So God's original purpose, having been disrupted, he began the second chapter, his present purpose, revealed through his chosen people Israel, his plan of redemption, culminating in the coming of his Son to earth to save us from our sins. Some say that this was not our Lord's original intention, that he came to start a movement to recruit disciples, and that his death on the cross was a secondary development. But the sacrifices and prophecies of the Old Testament pointed to Calvary, God's Son becoming our sin.

We would try to mop the floor and leave the faucet running, sweep away the cobwebs and do nothing about the spider. Sin is the cause of all our trouble, and Jesus came to deal with sin, to reconcile us to God and bring us into the path of his ultimate purpose. Today God is taking out from the world a purchased people for his name.

One day our Lord will return and the saints will reign with him over a redeemed creation. That creation is standing on tiptoe, as Dr. Phillips puts it, waiting for that day of the manifestation of the sons of God, the restoration and regeneration and restitution of all things, when the meat shall inherit the earth and take over. Man in his natural state is trying to build a new paradise on earth by science and technology and his sophisticated know-how, but he is doomed to failure.

God is gathering out his people, those whom he has foreknown, predestinated, called, justified and glorified, and all that they might be conformed to the image of his Son, the first Adam of that new race of the children of God. This is the process by which he carries out his purpose with his people. That process has not been completed yet and we are in the middle chapter.

We live in a world wrecked by sin and we Christians are still in our human bodies, and the old Adamic nature has not been eradicated. We suffer like everybody else from disease, accidents, the disappointments, tragedies and bereavements to which all men are heirs. The building is still going up and there is much rubbish.

Remember how the rebuilders of the Jerusalem wall complained about the rubbish? When troubles pile up and unanswered questions multiply, when right seems forever on the scaffold and wrong forever on the throne, when it seems that the great adventure is careless and looking the other way, we must not forget that we are in chapter 2 of the book of God's purpose. We must not try to make final conclusions in the middle of the book. We do well to heed the advice of Paul, judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes.

We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus. There is no devil in the first pages of the Bible and no devil in the last pages. There is plenty of devil now, but he will be disposed of before the book ends.

His downfall is as good as accomplished in the mind and purpose of God. We live now in the middle chapter of God's present purpose, his permissive will. The devil is on a long chain with a wide range, it appears sometimes, but God holds the other end of that chain.

God makes some things happen and lets some things happen, but nothing ever just happens. Everything that happens is in the book of his purpose, and we cannot make sense out of some of it, but never forget, this is the middle chapter. We must never forget that things as they now are, are not in the original purpose of God, nor in his ultimate purpose.

For instance, the weather as it now is, seemingly without rhyme or reason, was not the way it started or the way it will end. God did not originally plan fearful earthquake and hurricane and death and destruction from the wild rampages of nature. Among the animals, the reign of tooth and claw was not the first word, nor will it be the last.

Famine and pestilence and wars are not on the first blueprints or the last. But in his present purpose, all of these things can work together for good to his people, the people of his purpose, as they consent to and cooperate with the process by which he works out that purpose in their lives. We make our way through grief and disaster, through flies to which we see no answer, unexplainable mysteries, but the eternal purpose of God moves on.

David may fall into sin, Peter may deny his Lord, and all the disciples forsaken. Christians may die under strange circumstances, best friends fail us, circumstances laugh at us, and the devil may play doleful tunes on frayed nerves. Our own little wave may seem to be defeated, but if one thing we're certain, the tide will win.

And that tide is the will of God, original, present, and future. And whatever comes now, never forget. This is the middle of the book.

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