



## **“I Found my Porpoise!”**

So, you have some money burning a hole in your pocket. It's the 40% of your money that you can use for your day-to-day needs and wants. Just because you have money doesn't mean you really know what to do with it. So how do you play the money game to win?

The first thing to do is to stop and ask yourself a question: “What do I really want from life?” Write down your answers. (Are you writing?) You want to do this because if you don't know what you want from life, how will you know whether or not the item you want to buy is something you really need? Remember, you work hard for your money, so you want to make every cent count. I want you to have as much happiness as you can get throughout life, and the wise use of money is a major factor in how happy we feel. Yet at the same time I want you to be able to save enough money to meet your future expenses, while avoiding the feeling that you have to exist in a lifelong state of deprivation. So, how do you balance all these things?

This principle is so simple that most people miss it. *Know exactly what you want out of life.* That's it. Figure out where you are going and what you need to get there, and then only spend your money on things that will help you move along the way.

Let's take an example. Say you have \$10 in your pocket. One day you find yourself at the mall with some friends, and they decide that they want something to eat. You go along because you enjoy their company, even though you're not very hungry yourself. What's the best thing for you to do with your money? Buy lunch anyway and then leave most of it on the plate, or have a glass of water while you chat with your friends as they eat? What is the primary point of being with your friends? Is it to spend time talking, laughing, and enjoying their company, or is it to

spend your hard-earned money? In most cases we are actually seeking the companionship and not the cooking. So be conscious about what your real needs are in life, and you will keep more of your money. By asking yourself the quick question “What do I actually want?” when faced with a possible purchase, you quickly lead yourself down a path of reasoning that shows you how to best spend – or keep – your cash.

### **Focusing Your Financial Future**

Now some of you might be saying, “Hold on a sec. That \$10 is from my “living” allowance, the 40% of my cash that I can spend on myself in any way that I choose. Why can’t I go out to eat with my friends?” Well, no one will stop you, unless you do. Sure, you are able to spend that \$10, but don’t you want it to go as far as it can, and only be spent on things that add real meaning to your life? If the answer to this question is “Yes,” then you need to get in the habit of asking yourself, “What do I really want?”

*What I’m trying to do with you right now is to help you figure out what is your primary purpose in life. Why? Simple. To keep more of your “living” money in your own pocket until you spend it on something really good.*

Students of all ages have told me that by knowing their real purpose in life they have been able to decrease the amount of money they spend on a whim. This tendency toward unplanned purchases is called impulse buying, and it is a huge source of revenue for companies in the United States. Firms spend millions of dollars on research each year to learn the best way to separate you from your money. The most effective means of countering their ingenious advertising campaigns is to know up front whether or not a potential impulse buy actually will serve your purpose.

So what is a purpose suitable for a lifetime? In particular, your lifetime. To me, a good purpose is a task that you want to do that will make life better, either for yourself, your family, or folks in the community (and ideally for all three). We’re not talking about what sort of job or career you want to have. We are not discussing the activity that you do to *make* your money. We’re talking about the thing that you want to do because you enjoy it more than anything else in the world, a task that brings you pleasure and helps other people, too! Do you want to start a band? Buy toys for sick kids at the local hospital? Educate people your own age on how to build

their own website? Build the next dot.com megabusiness? Whatever you like to do with your time that serves more people than just yourself is your life's purpose.

Most people glide through life with no conscious idea that there is (or at least should be) more to living than eating, sleeping and working. Amazing, isn't it? In horror movies such individuals are called "zombies." Don't be one of them. Break out of this mold and decide to do something with your life that gives you a sense of purpose and at the same time is something that you really have fun doing. You have probably heard the saying that goes "If you love what you do on the job, you'll never work a day in your life." This adage is a true law of the Universe. Find your purpose and you'll never "work" again, no matter how hard the tasks you perform in the course of a day. Better yet, the true reward for your effort comes in the pleasure of the job itself. The money is an added benefit. This is the kind of life you want to make for yourself, because such contentment is worth more than all the money in the world.

### **Do What You Like, the Money Will Come**

One of my young adult students really enjoys listening to family stories. She began by recording tales that her grandmother and grandfather told her about their own childhood in rural Mississippi. One year as a Christmas gift she handed out these stories in a book to all of her family members. She now goes around to different people in her community and in retirement homes listening to the stories these folks have to tell about their lives. In fact, she is now working on her third book, one that focuses on women who worked during World War II in the factories of Detroit. She has found her purpose. She is an author. She calls herself a verbal historian. She really enjoys interviewing people to help catalogue their knowledge for future generations. This "job" gives her a fulfilling life that leaves her happy because she knows she is contributing to the history of her country. By the way, her books are in high demand, so her chosen "career" also makes her loads of money!

Now, your thing may not be writing at all. Maybe you want to become the best electric guitar player who ever lived. Or maybe a marine biologist, or a public servant, or a stay-at-home parent. Fine. The point is this: think about what you want to do with your time, and how your chosen activity will keep money flowing into your life. You want it to be something that you enjoy, but that also serves other people. Playing music helps others to forget their own troubles while allowing you to be creative. Starting that band allows many people to get together to play

music, form friendships, and make some money, too! (Although your parents may argue with you over whether or not what you are playing in the basement should be classified as “Music!”) Even a stay-at-home parent whose main joy in life is caring for the family can harness the power of the money cycle, either by doing some form of paying work at home (like free-lance writing, medical transcription, or serving as the community Tupperware salesperson) or by learning how to cut expenses to the bone. The point is that the old proverb is true: do what you love, and the money will follow.

Moreover, by knowing your purpose in life you will stop spending money wastefully on things that do not add to your real happiness. By having a goal that is bigger than yourself, you come to know that the reason you have cash is not to hoard it or to spend it selfishly on material things, but rather to do something that will make this world a better place and allow you to have fun at the same time. Is that cool, or what? Finding your purpose and following it is the best way I know to prevent you from impulse buying. You’ll stop and think, “Hey, do I really want that new computer game, or do I want to save my money for that new amplifier the band needs?” Your choices will be better. Your “living” money will go farther. You will be reaching your goals. You will be truly content. And that, my friend, is the name of the game.

### **In Your Sight, In Your Mind**

Another old saying with a lot of truth to it is the one that goes, “Out of sight, out of mind.” The reason I bring this up is that you need to find a way to constantly remind yourself of your purpose in life, or you will forget it. But how do you do this? Create a visual reminder of your purpose, one that will spring readily to your mind’s eye even if you are far away for long periods of time. Here is how to go about it.

During one financial seminar I held for youth I was explaining the power of purpose and told the students that the best way to stay true to their goals was to have a three-dimensional object they could look at from time to time. This object could be anything as long as it reminded them of their purpose and would provide them with immediate visual remembrance of their reason for working hard in life.

After the lunch break I found a plain brown paper bag on the podium. I was a bit hesitant to open it since many of the kids in the room were trying hard to stifle giggles. I also had the fleeting impression that there might be something alive and slimy in the bag. I need not have

worried. When I finally plunged my hand into the sack, I pulled it back to find this small stuffed Dolphin. My mind was totally filled with questions marks at this point. Finally, a sweet young voice called from the back of the room, “Mrs. Bolon, I just wanted to let you know that I found my porpoise!” All the kids laughed, and I joined them. All of us realized that a porpoise was a great three-dimensional object for helping to keep one’s own noble purpose clearly in mind. I was also tickled that everyone in the classroom had understood the importance of finding their own great purpose.

A year later another student approached me with his three-dimensional object. It had taken him a few months of hard thinking to pull together his purpose, and he wanted to show me what he had worked up. As he told me his plans for music and pulling together a band with a unique sound, he unveiled the picture he was carrying. It was a framed gold CD on a black velvet background. I was so proud that he had never given up on his dream. No matter that forming a band is hard. He had recognized that this was his dream, and also his purpose in life, and so he had chosen an object to give him a real target to shoot for ... a solid gold album!

It doesn’t matter what three-dimensional object you choose to keep your purpose in mind, as long as it matters to you. Pick a good vivid object like a porpoise or a gold CD, and then each time you’re out and about you will be able to stop yourself when presented with a sudden impulse to spend money and automatically ask whether or not the proposed purchase is really worth delaying your purpose. This simple technique works to keep more of your money in your pocket to use on the things that will really give you pleasure by advancing your purpose. The whole idea can be summed up using the words spoken by a doomed Rebel commander during the climactic assault on the Death Star during the original *Star Wars* movie: “Stay on target.”

Don’t be discouraged if you don’t know “what you want to be when you grow up.” Pick a good purpose, and stick with it – even if it just for now. Your purpose as a young adult may start off really mundane, like saving cash for a car or a computer or to start your own web-based business. But as more money comes into your life and as you grow and begin to seek farther afield for opportunities to make money, you’ll see things in your community or your country or even the world that you want to impact. And then before you know it...you have a porpoise!

**Exercise 3: Write down the answers to these questions.**

**What is it that I would do with my time if I could choose to do whatever I wanted?**

**What types of activities would really make me excited to get out of bed each morning?**

**What are ten things that I could do to make money?**

**Now, pick three money-making opportunities from that list of ten that you would really *enjoy*. This list is the foundation of your purpose. Start here to decide what you are going to do now to serve your community and make money, too!**