

READING • SESSION 11 • MISSION & THE ONE THING

WHYZMEN • THIS WEEK'S READING

Big P, Little p

Whose you are, and what you are for this season

When to read it: after the Clearness Room Guide, and before you write \$2.2 Purpose & Contribution. About ten minutes.

Why it is here: this morning you drafted two rungs that answer two different questions. Rung 1 named *whose you are*. Rung 2 named *what you do, and for whom*. This page gives those two answers names, so you can tell them apart for the rest of your life.

1 • Two words for one calling

Purpose, with a capital P, is your *why*: the one enduring calling. **purposes**, with a small p, are your *where, with whom, and right now*.

Os Guinness puts the order plainly in *The Call*: “First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia).” Everything else we are called to do flows from that first call.

Think of a sailboat. Capital P is the **keel**: below the waterline, out of sight, and the reason the boat does not roll over in a gust. Small p are the **sails**, trimmed and changed for each season’s wind. Sails without a keel go wherever the wind goes. A keel without sails goes nowhere at all.

	Purpose (capital P)	purpose (small p)
The question	Whose am I? Why am I here?	What am I for, here and now, and for whom?
How it arrives	Received more than invented	Chosen, tested, revised
How long it lasts	Steady across every chapter	Meant to change with the season
Where it lives in your Charter	Rung 1 of your mission (\$2.1): “I have been sent to ...”	Rung 2 (\$2.1), \$2.2 Purpose & Contribution, and your domain visions

One more distinction, from this morning. A **goal** can be finished: *visit the youth group in March*. A small p cannot: *be a steady older friend to the young men at this church, this season*. Goals serve your purposes; your purposes serve your Purpose. Three layers, and the order matters.

Ephesians 2:10 holds the top two in one sentence: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” *Handiwork* is the Purpose. *Good works* are the purposes. Notice which comes first.

2 • You reach the large through the small

You have heard it all year: the ultimate is only reachable in the particular. Not love in general, but *this* conversation. Not beauty in general, but *this* sunset. Purpose works the same way.

Nobody lives his capital P in the abstract. He lives it on a Tuesday morning, with this grandson, at this table, through one small p. If you wait to *feel* your Purpose before you act on a purpose, you may wait a long time. Most men find it the other way round: they act on a small p, and the large one shows itself in the doing.

3 • How you know you have found it

It rarely feels like a eureka. It feels more like recognition: *oh, that has been me all along*. Viktor Frankl argued that meaning is discovered, not invented. An old Quaker saying puts it more gently: *let your life speak*. Here are five signs. You have already met most of them.

Convergence. Your story, values, strengths and gifts keep pointing the same way. That is what your Convergence Board showed you at Session 8.

Confirmation. Other people name it before you do. That is what happened when the body named you at Session 9.

Energy. It gives more than it takes, even when the work is hard.

Persistence. It survives setbacks and keeps coming back. You may have tried to set it down before, and it would not stay down.

Peace. A settledness, not a thrill. Frederick Buechner: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” The gladness is the sign.

No man needs all five at once. Two or three pointing the same way are worth taking seriously. One by itself, especially energy, is worth testing before you trust it.

4 • One Purpose, ten domains

Picture the Harvest Tree from Session 1. Capital P is not one of the ten branches. It is the **sap**, and it feeds all ten. Small p grows branch by branch and looks different on each: one purpose in your marriage, another in your friendships, another in how you spend your strength and your money.

The **Identity & Purpose** domain is where you put the P into words. The other nine are where you live it out.

At Session 13 you will choose three **priority domains**, the three that get your best hours this season. You will weigh two signals: where your vision points, and which readiness gauges have moved or refused to. One caution to carry until then: do not assume your Purpose lives only in

your strongest domain. That is often the old job in new clothes, the provisional self back for another tour. A purpose that only shows up where you are already good may just be a skill looking for its next title.

5 • Chapters and seasons

Capital P holds steady while small p turns over with the seasons. “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

A fact worth knowing: Bruce Feiler collected more than two hundred life stories for *Life Is in the Transitions*. He found the average adult meets a significant disruption roughly every year or so, and three to five “lifequakes” that reshape everything. Each one rewrites the small p. None of them has to erase the capital P.

Søren Kierkegaard wrote in his journal that life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards. That is why the fall was spent reading your story. Men often see their capital P most clearly by looking back across their chapters, at the thread that held through every one.

6 • Settled in one domain, in between in another

That is not a contradiction. It is normal. At Session 3 you learned that every transition has a messy middle. Here is the part we did not say then: **each domain keeps its own clock**. A man can be clear and fruitful in his marriage and his service while his health or his friendships are still in the messy middle.

Jesus gave us the picture: “He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (John 15:2). Pruning in one branch is not evidence the tree is dying. Often it is evidence the Gardener expects more fruit.

CARRY THESE • NOT TO WRITE, TO CARRY

Whose am I? Your capital P.

What am I for this season, and for whom? Your small p.

Which of my domains is settled, and which is in the messy middle?

Where it shows up in WhyzMen

Session	What it adds to Big P and little p
S1 Basecamp	The Harvest Tree and the ten domains: one tree, one sap.
S3	Provisional and true; the messy middle.
S5–S6	Reading your story backwards to find the thread.
S8 Strengths	The Convergence Board. The Signature (who you are) and the Contribution Hypothesis (a first small p).
S9	Named by the Body: confirmation from outside.
S11 Mission	Rung 1 is the Purpose; Rung 2 is a purpose. Goal versus purpose.
S12–S13	Domain visions; three priority domains.
S15	The two purpose questions, answered again.

Sources: Os Guinness, *The Call* (1998) • Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking* (1973) • Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* • Bruce Feiler, *Life Is in the Transitions* (2020) • Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals* (1843).

Scripture quotations taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

WhyzMen • Rewire Retirement • Session 11 Reading • Big P, Little p • r1