

# Jerry Lewis of Center, TX on Purpose, Calling, and the Heart of Ministry

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For Jerry Lewis, purpose is not a slogan for motivational posters or business seminars. It is the foundation of a meaningful life, the difference between striving endlessly and resting securely in what God designed a person to do.

“Your heart won’t be fulfilled unless you are fulfilling your purpose,” Lewis begins. “Purpose doesn’t need a paycheck. It doesn’t chase validation. It doesn’t demand attention. Purpose endures. It’s longsuffering. It carries the power to prevail through pure perseverance. If you want to unlock your power, you must pursue your purpose.”

He pauses, then adds with conviction, “And friend, that purpose is always rooted in Christ. There’s an empty void in every heart, and it’s in the shape of Him. It can only be filled by God Himself.”

## The Difference Between Career and Calling

Lewis is particularly outspoken on one area where he believes this truth is often misunderstood: the pastorate. Too many, he argues, confuse ministry with career.

“Sometimes I hear men refer to their pastoral role as their ‘career,’” he says. “Friend, a man chooses a career — and he can change that career whenever he gets ready. But when God calls a man to pastor or preach, that man has no choice if he wants peace in his life.”

Lewis notes that in Jeremiah 20:9, the prophet describes God’s word as “a fire shut up in my bones” — a fire that compelled him to speak whether he wished to or not. “That’s what calling feels like,” Lewis explains. “It’s not convenient. It’s consuming.”

By contrast, he says, there are “career pastors” who stepped into ministry because it fit their background, their family’s tradition, or simply seemed like a respectable way to make a living. “But a called pastor is different. You’ll know him by his burden for God’s church, by his willingness to sacrifice himself for it. A career pastor will sacrifice the church for himself. A called pastor will sacrifice himself for the church.”

## Knowing God, Not Just Knowing About Him

Lewis stresses that the difference is not merely in knowledge, but in intimacy. “It’s not how well a man knows the Bible as a book,” he reflects. “It’s how well he knows the God who wrote it.”

He points to Jesus’ words in John 10:14: “*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*” “That’s relationship language,” Lewis says. “A shepherd doesn’t just quote facts about his flock — he lives with them, sacrifices for them, even lays down his life for them. That’s what a called pastor does. And that’s what every believer is invited into with Christ Himself.”

## The Call to All Believers

Though his words may sound directed only at pastors, Lewis insists the principle applies to everyone. Every person, he says, has a God-given purpose that cannot be substituted with comfort, success, or applause.

“Paul said in Philippians 3:14, *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. That wasn’t about his career. That was about his purpose in Christ. And that’s what keeps a man pressing on when it would be easier to quit.”

He offers a simple challenge: “Your past is not your present, but your present will determine how your past is remembered. If you want your life to count — if you want to unlock the power God’s placed inside you — don’t chase a career, don’t chase applause. Pursue your purpose. Pursue Christ.”

## A Voice from East Texas

In a town like Center, where tradition and faith run deep, Jerry Lewis’s words cut against the grain of easy religion. Yet, his voice carries both urgency and hope. “God isn’t looking for perfect people,” he says. “He’s looking for people willing to be faithful. If you’re separated *unto* Him, everything else will follow.”

And with that, Lewis offers the kind of reminder that feels less like a lecture and more like an invitation: “Friend, the question isn’t what career you’re building or what sins you’re avoiding. The real question is — are you fulfilling your purpose in Christ?”

— *Ellis Ward*

## Media Contact

jerry lewis

\*\*\*\*\*@gmail.com

(415) 494-4103

Center, Texas

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