

## My Purpose and the Technology Disconnect

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When was the last time you woke up in the morning and the first thing you did – before you picked up your phone to scroll for new messages – was to be still and connect to your inner self? Do you reflect on your purpose regularly? I know I'd be happier if I did this more often!

We are living at a time where doing simple, basic things is getting more difficult. The digital age has certainly provided us with many benefits to our external environment but at the same time it has created isolation in the inner world of heart.

The rise of social media has brought humanity closer by bridging the miles between us. Texts and Snapchats have replaced letters that used to take weeks to circumnavigate the globe. We are all a little closer. But a less obvious side effect of technology is that we have inadvertently created more distance internally. Instead of thinking, “who am I”, we consult social media.

### Outer World vs Inner World

The digital life we have embraced has shifted our ability to reflect inward. Heads bent over smart phones are evident when you walk down any street or go into a coffee shop . Spending such an abundance of time staring at phones, tablets or computers exacts a price on our ability to reflect, be comfortable with silence and focus internally.

We are living in an age where we are looking outside of ourselves for stimulation and are in danger of failing to discover the depths within. Making it a practice to scroll through your mind for reasons to be grateful first thing in the morning can be a game changer.

Youth and young adulthood is all about discovering the self. It's an important time and shouldn't be crowded out by the busy environment that assaults us daily. Having time to think of nothing releases your mind to percolate ideas and take those all-important quantum leaps of imagination. That's when creativity happens.



### Living in a city that never sleeps

Living in South Korea for several years awakened me to this problem. The capital of South Korea, Seoul, can probably rival New York as the city that never sleeps. A quarter of South Korea's population is jammed into this energetic city that is about as digitized as they come. Korea has the world's [fastest Internet speed](#) and [highest smartphone ownership](#), ranking first in [ICT Development](#), [e-Government](#) and [4G LTE coverage](#). In this environment, it's not easy for young people to control their schedules and

manage the competitive environment around them. This is a phenomenon faced by almost all young people in developed countries.

My experiences made me question if our technological riches are making us duller to the still, small voice of the inner self? I decided to test this idea by carrying out a student survey for two weeks. I discovered that the generalization that young people are not interested in internal, philosophical, or spiritual concerns is simply not true! The results showed that rather than a lack of interest, their issue was a lack of time to think about these things, or at least that was their perception.

Similar experiences to the one in South Korea can be found in any number of other developed countries. People are focusing less on the inner self and more on the different issues surrounding them. We are turning away from the basics that start within the inner self.

## Two kinds of purpose

When was the last time you thought about the purpose of your life? Not just the direction you personally need to follow but also the overall direction for humanity. Where are we headed? Simple questions, right? However, I've noticed it's getting more difficult to find people pondering these basic, fundamental questions. Surprisingly, getting back to basics is becoming more and more difficult to practice – we need to make time for questions of the heart, despite busy schedules, work or other circumstances.

While living in Korea, and meeting with Korean students I had a deep realization after speaking to one young student. I asked him what he thought the purpose of life should be. Without hesitation, he answered that for him it would be to become a scientist.

Obviously, this is something that he thinks about every day. Since it relates to his studies, it's not surprising that it took him only a few seconds to answer. I followed up with another question "Yes, but what do you think the purpose of a human being is, or should be?" His surprised expression and hesitation to respond said a lot.

## Shared vision needed to advance humanity

Everyone longs to find their individual purpose. There is a tendency to think of purpose as something mostly connected to a career or personal goals, but that is only one aspect. Purpose includes a common purpose we all share together. It unites us.



*Alonso Ahmetaj in Korea*

Humanity's common purpose is less connected to what we do and more connected to who we are as a human family. Before being journalists, lawyers, artists or any other profession in society we are human beings with a shared purpose. We need to figure this out together.

Living in the digital age we can certainly benefit from the many technological advancements. I can't imagine a world without email or not being able to video chat. While being appreciative of the benefits, we should not forget to pay attention to the simple and basic truths that are essential to being fully human.