

WELCOME TO THE PLANET

Part 5: You Were Shaped for Serving God

Intro

What we said in week one is this. If there is no God ... if there is no God this question “What on earth am I here for” is really an irrelevant question. It has no meaning whatsoever.

But... what if? What if we assume that there is a God, that there is a creator, a designer, a maker behind all this. And if there is then when He created this earth that He had purpose behind His creation. If He had purpose behind His creation then He had purpose behind your life and my life because we are part of creation. And if there is purpose behind your life or my life then really what it comes down to is I must either a) ignore it and blow it off – “God’s got purpose for this world but I don’t really care” – or b) I must pursue it.

Tonight we’re going to look at a fourth purpose and we’ll end next week. But the fourth purpose of your life based on what the Bible teaches is this: You were shaped for serving God. Tonight’s message is really a message of can God use you to make a difference in this world? You are shaped for serving God.

To start tonight think about the next couple of questions. Don’t answer out loud, but honestly answer for yourself in your own head.

Will I consume or contribute?

When it comes to your life if I could go around and call you out by name and say, Will you consume or contribute? What I’m suggesting or asking is are you going to be a consumer like just take things in or are you going to contribute with your life?

Am I a getter or a giver?

Am I about just getting stuff? I want to consume and get. Or do I want to give with my life.

Then the third question...

Do I expect others to serve me or do I look to serve others?

If you would look at those questions. One is about future, one’s about present and the other is about attitude. I hate to oversimplify it but people are either a difference maker or they’re a space waster. That may seem a little bit corny.

But they either fall into the difference maker category: “Yeah, I can make a difference with my life!” or they’re in the category of what I might call a space waster. My hope and my prayer is that something tonight clicks in in your mind or your heart that says, “I don’t want to waste space. I don’t want to just take up space. I want to make a difference.”

Are you a difference maker or a space waster?

If you want to make a difference in this world you must commit to contribute, give, and serve others.

Think about any person who has made a significant positive difference in the world. Everyone of them spent a good portion of their lives in service to others. (MLK, Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, etc.) Think about your own life, who are the people who have made a significant influence on your life? Would you say they spent a lot of time, effort, and energy on you?

If you desire to contribute, give, and serve others you must discover your GIFTS and opportunities and SERVE.

It's real simple. If you want to make a difference, if you want to contribute, if you want to give, if you want to serve, you've got to discover what gifts you have and God has given you gifts what opportunities there are to use your gifts and then really – basically – serve.

However, if you plan to consume, get, and be served you must begin preparing yourself for a LONELY life and one without much MEANING.

Some of you, you might disagree with me. "That's what I'd expect a pastor to say" – let me tell you this a life without meaning is a miserable life. A life without meaning, a life that doesn't serve, a life that doesn't contribute, a life that doesn't see how can I enhance the world is really a miserable life.

When you live a miserable life little things bother you all the time. You're never happy. Eventually they become a tired, angry, old person. Or say it like this: if you live only to please yourself you'll wind up empty, you'll wind up lonely, you'll wind up feeling insignificant. But if you live to serve others you'll find a deep rooted joy and a significance that God intended for you.

I believe this is a truth: "Service is the route to significance." It was just you and me, eye to eye, knee to knee and I asked you, "Do you want a life of significance?" chances are you'd say yes. I would tell you that the route, the road, the path to significance is not to be a getter but to be a giver. It's not to be served, but it is to serve.

Galatians 6:2-3

2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

I like that. If you think you're too cool to help somebody else the Bible says you're fooling yourself and you're a nobody.

Mark 8:34-35

34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

Look at what the verse says. "Keep your life for yourself and you will lose it." That doesn't seem to make sense. "But if you give up your life you will find true life." Jesus is saying, "If you want to live life to its fullest, if you want to live a life of significance it's not to hang on to it. It's to give up your life, to serve other people, to contribute, to be a difference maker not a space waster."

A PICTURE OF A LIFE NOT WASTED...

1. Make a difference HERE (within the local church)

Do you want a life not wasted? You make a difference here. One of the purposes we talked about a couple weeks ago was you are formed for God's family. We talked about God's family is the church. That each of us was to belong to one another and build one another up. You want to make a difference, you make a difference here. You start here.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

The image here is an image of a body where everything has a role and it says they are separate and necessary, that they all work together. And your work here makes a difference.

You don't see the spleen. Your spleen would not say, "Hey, I'm a little tired of being a spleen. I'd like to be an ear. Pull me out. Let me see if I can hear." No, it doesn't work that way. A spleen does the work of a spleen. Whatever it does. It spleens. The esophagus doesn't say, "Set me free! I want to see!" No. The esophagus is to esophagate. Each of them has their role. Make a difference here. You want to make a difference in your life? Make a difference here. Start here.

Step 1: Decide that you want to serve. Decide that you want to make a difference.

Step 2: Choose a place

Step 3: Contact the ministry leader

Opportunities to serve here:

- Children's ministry
- Tech ministry
- God's table
- VBS
- Setup and take down

We all have different gifts and God wants us to use them. Now that I've given my life to Christ and His ministry I feel like God is right there coaching me through my daily decisions. If you are not already involved in ministry there's no better time than now to find out what you can do for God. I encourage you to take that risk. I have and it changed my life.

If you want to start making a difference start here...

2. Make a difference in THE WORLD

I realize this world seems big. What is the world? Basically it's outside your neighborhood. There are needs all over the world. Once you start serving here and you understand what God does and say, "I don't want to be a space waster. I want to be a difference maker," and He births some excitement into your life and you begin to look outside.

Matthew 25:34-40

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

When you and I make a difference in the world, somewhere outside of our little neighborhood or our little backyard, then really what we're doing is when you feed a hungry person the Bible says in essence you're serving God. When you clothe someone who's sick you're serving God.

Opportunities to change the world:

- Operation Christmas child
- Mission Trip to Honduras
- First Refuge
- Canned food drives etc.

Here's the bottom line of these first two points: God has ministry for you in the CHURCH and a mission for you in the WORLD.

When you have a ministry in the church and a mission in the world here's what happens...

3. Seek ETERNAL rewards

I realize this one is a little tough. In the time that we have I can't fully explain it but the Cliff Note version. The Bible is very clear that there will be some type of rewards in heaven.

Jeremiah 17:10

I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.

I don't want to communicate what is described as a works theology. That means that you can work your way to God. You can't work your way to God. What I am saying the Bible teaches that in heaven there will be a reward for our works. But please hear me very clearly. You can't work your way to God. The Bible teaches that you come to God by faith alone. Only faith can save us. Only faith can make us right with God. Only faith – me putting my faith in Jesus Christ who died on the cross and rose from the dead – only my faith gets me to heaven. Not works. If works got us to heaven Jesus wouldn't have had to die on the cross. If you could pay your own way Jesus wouldn't have had to die on the cross.

However there will be rewards in Eternity.

Matthew 6:1-2

1 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

Hypocrites would go into the synagogue and when they would give an offering they would make some noise and then they would give their offering. They would give their offering for others to see it.

When you step out to make a difference here or in the world, don't do it just so you can be recognized. That's what this verse is about. If you are stepping out to make a difference in the world so that people will say good things about you, you're not really serving others. You are using others to serve yourself, you still are being selfish and you're not going to truly be fulfilled.

While we're doing all of that here's what happens...

4. Watch your life be molded to be LIKE JESUS

Actually for those of you who were here last week this ties in to what we talked about last week. Remember last week we said you're created to be like Christ.

Let me end by saying this. You are never more like Jesus Christ than when you serve.

Matthew 20:26-28

26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

So you and I, we're never more like Jesus than when we serve. Watch your life be molded to be like Jesus.

The Bible says you were shaped for serving God. God didn't create you to take up space. God created you to make a difference in this world, to use your gifts to discover them, to search out the opportunities and then to serve. If you're not currently serving somewhere, someone, some way maybe you felt during tonight's message that "maybe I should". That wasn't me. That was the Holy Spirit rapping on your heart saying, "You're never more like Jesus than when you serve." And it ties into that purpose that we talked about last week.

Discussion Questions

- Do you agree that most of the difference makers in the world are people who serve others?
- Why do you think God created us to find purpose in serving others?
- Why do you think people who seek to serve themselves have trouble finding meaning in life?
- How does it make you feel that God has a purpose for you here in this church?
- What does that say about what God thinks about you?
- How hard do you think it is to make a difference here in this church?
 - (Emphasize all it takes is a willingness to serve, there are tons of opportunities.)
- Why do you think service toward others is so important to God?
- Why do you think God would call you to make a difference in the world?
- We talked about some ministries and opportunities to make difference in the world, how might you or your small group get involved in some of those?
- Would you say that the reason *why* you serve others is just as important as *what* you do to serve others? Why or why not?
- Why do you think God cares about our motives for serving others?
- In your own words how does serving others help us become more like Jesus?