

## Living with Purpose

Series: REBOOT: Fresh Start for a New Year

Brad Bailey – January 15, 2023

Intro

Welcome. Great to have you here.

I have to begin by asking... WHY are you here?

I don't mean why are you here in this gathering.... I mean ...why are you here at all? Why do you exist?

It's a big question... and fitting to stop and ask as we launch into our series to begin the new year.

A series in which we realize that we are but it is also a foundational question.

Everything functions in relationship it's purpose.

If I asked you how a pen you were writing with was functioning...you would think... the purpose of a pen is to leave a mark as you move it....and so you would say it's functioning well if it was doing that. The chair you are sitting on... you know it's purpose ...to support you sitting down.

And yet...if asked what the purpose of ourselves is...we can be at a loss.

We can

Today...we are launching into our series to start the new year...

In a "Peanuts" comic strip, Lucy and Charlie Brown are engaged in earnest conversation about the meaning of life. Lucy feels that it's a matter of one's perspective. She says that "Life is like a deck chair. Some people place it so they can see where they are going. Some people place it so they can see where they have been. And some people place it so they can see where they are now." Charlie ponders Lucy's little discourse, then replies, "I can't even get mine unfolded."

Let me begin with an exercise ...

VISUALIZATION: Enter a church... realize it's a funeral...make your way to the only seat... which is the front row.... And then you realize... it's your own funeral. Various people are going to share... they may be friends, family, co-workers. Now in heart... what would you like to hear said... about **what** you did with your life... and **how** you did it.

- Some of you may have found it hard to hear what others might say... and I trust the coming weeks will help inspire you in your sense of purpose.
- Others may have heard things come from deep within you, things which you may realize aren't consciously connected to your daily life.

Common to think about how our lives may not be fulfilling what we would hope to do and be. But that is why it is valuable to stop and reflect... to consider our earthly lives with the end in mind.

The challenge of modern life...is that we've exchanged purpose for pace ...we are increasing our speed in most dimensions of life-yet we have a decreasing sense of where we are going....and most importantly WHY.

We try to manage life by focusing just on what we do. We can talk all about what we can do with our lives... or what we will do today...but not why. And if we think about it.... The WHY of life should be what informs the WHAT of life.

Our modern times have been called the **age of entertainment... of amusement**. And it's interesting to realize that the word "Amusement"... literally means... 'not (a) think (muse)' → I really enjoy amusement & amusement parks, but I don't want to be...as one described... "amused to death.". [1]

**"Purposeful" on the other hand**, means we stop to think.

**Purposeful – "resolutely aiming at a specific end; not meaningless."**

**Our lives were created with purpose and meaning...**

The Bible says this in

***"The Lord has made everything for His own purpose."* Proverbs 16.4**

It's for His purpose. Now God has never made anything without a purpose. Every rock has a purpose, every plant has a purpose, every animal has a purpose and if you're alive, you have a purpose.

**You were created with purpose.**

Now there is a **breadth of aspects** to our purpose in life... some purposes we all share...as well as ways in which God may direct our lives personally... but the ultimate purpose... is that of glorifying and enjoying God forever. [2]

*As Jesus expressed in prayer to the Father as the end of his life,*  
***"I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began."* - John 17:4-5 (NLT)**

*Jesus lived for the clear purpose of bringing glory to God the Father... with whom He shared such glory and would return to such glory.*

*As the Westminster Confession surmises,*  
***"The purpose of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."***

*Now there are **many expressions of this**. Many of the core callings associated with the calling of Christ reflect this. We are called to worship. Not just singing songs....but being people who give worth... which is something we all do every day...but our worth is to be directed toward the God....the true source of true good. We are called to community... to reunite community in our common life with God. We are called to serve others with the gifts we have been given. And we could go on...There is far more that we could explore ...but our **ultimate purpose is to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever."** This can guide our lives, even while we continue to seek God's more specific plans for our lives.*

As the Apostle Paul wrote,

**“Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” - 1 Corinthians 10:31**

Our purpose in life has the **power to guide us**... like a **compass**.

Our purpose in life has the **power to protect us**... from being exploited.

If you don't know something's purpose, it is likely to be abused. You want to know why there are so many abused people today? Because we don't know our purpose. When you don't know the purpose of something, it is likely to be misused, or abused

**So I want to identify what Jesus teaches us about the process of forming a life rooted in purpose.**

**If we look at the life of Christ**... there are **five elements which can help us in discovering and developing... lives that are rooted in purpose**....five strategies for living with purpose, each of which reflect the life of Christ,

### **1. Listen to the Divine Claim of God**

In the life of Jesus... God had spoken prophetically... certainly passed onto him... and we know that when he was young he was engaging the Scriptures... and praying. And then, as *Jesus begin his ministry on a journey with his disciples, the Gospel accounts describe a moment in which “a voice from heaven said, ”*

**“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)**

This was certainly unique given his divine nature and role...but not entirely distinct from us.

Through all these ways...Jesus says God is and will speak to our inner being.

This is the very foundation of our purpose...and far greater than we will explore today. But it leads to the second...

### **2. Confront the Competing Claims (Faced in the Wilderness)**

Jesus - As the very next verse describes,

**“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” - Matthew 4:1-11**

We discover throughout Scripture that those who lived most purposefully are those who took the time in the wilderness:

- **Moses**- had passions for his people... but it took 40 years tending flocks to prepare him to go where God would call him.
- **Paul**- great zeal, but after Christ called him so thunderously he was knocked off his horse and blinded... we're told he spent 3 days blind, not eating or drinking anything. What do you suppose was going on within him those 3 days?

**Often it's in the wilderness, alone, that we face our demons... our temptations... and can forge our deepest determination.**

It's **where we determine our deepest "NO"**, so we can live out our deepest "YES" to that to which we've been called.

And what we will usually face is the **lure of personal prominence**... seeking to be the center... **rather than God's glory**. (That is reflected in the lives of **Moses, Jesus, and Paul**)

Suggest that just like Christ... usually **not the grand but the good, not the large but the lasting**.

**Purposes are like the roots of plants that have to grow deep and sturdy in order for the plant to remain healthy.**

That means we need to work the soil of our souls...to face and keep facing our own temptations... what seeks to buy our allegiance.

### **3. Settle Up the Past**

Interesting that **only one account of Christ's childhood** is noted...and it is one in which **he must communicate his purpose to his parents**.

→ Many of us have needed to say "THIS is my life's direction," honoring and caring for our parents, but breaking any indebtedness that is higher than our indebtedness to God.

I recall hearing about a bride being brought down the aisle by her father...and as they reach the front and he gives her away,,,she slips something into his hand. Was it a special note? No...it was his credit card. It was time for her to give it back.

She didn't forget her father, she settled up....she understood... you "leave" before you "cleave."  
You settle up with the past... and any indebtedness.

This is reflected in what the Apostle Paul wrote ...

**"... I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead..." - Philippians 3:13**

→ That's the Biblical idea of Forgetting; It's not an erasing of memory, but a clearing up of debt; so we are free.

It's a **simple principle** we learned in **Drivers Education**: Check the rear view mirror before you pull out, but use the windshield for driving. We can learn from our past, but we don't need to live by our past.

### **4. Embrace Response-Ability**

We can all struggle with responsibility. It's a word we often have negative associations with. But it is simply a combining of the two words response and ability. It means that we have the ability to respond. It means we have the power to make choices. [3]

In our current time... we have become so aware of so much that "acts upon us"... that we lose our sense that we can also act and choose.

The very description of Adam and Eve trying to hide from God and then trying to direct blame for their choices is a clear picture of what God calls us to face. We have to embrace our personal responsibility.

Jesus was clear that every life is accountable. He taught parables... explaining that life was like that of being entrusted with a master's resources, to which we will be held accountable when they return,

And perhaps the most personal of examples, is when Jesus is recommissioning Peter, Peter asks about one of the other disciples. And Jesus replies; When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." (John 21:21-22)

We do well to receive Paul's words to the younger Timothy.

**"Guard what has been entrusted to your care" - I Timothy 6:20**

Living with purpose... requires that we embrace personal responsibility for our lives.

Finally....

## **5. Establish Commitments**

Living with purpose will involve a life that can make commitments.

We live in a highly consumer-oriented culture... who is so shaped by wanting to have options... and almost an aversion to commitments. And yet **a life of purpose involves commitment.**

God's purposes were fulfilled by making very intentional covenants with very specific people; and **God's very nature came among us in Christ...made a commitment to 12 disciples**

Jesus understood ...that despite how high of a purpose he had... it involved the most down to earth real life commitments. He made a commitment to twelve lives in particular ...and he didn't change them.

And he knew the same was true for us.

**Jesus said ... “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” - Luke 9:62**

This may sound strange...but he is speaking to exactly our struggle. We tend to lack resolve... to lack roots. We are into something only at a level of momentary feelings.

**Those who have lived with great purpose...** are those who have made great commitments. Many have great aspirations...but they never make the commitments that are needed to actually achieve anything.

**Some commitments can change over time...**you might change jobs but you are still committed to working before you retire. You may change the church community ...but still be committed to a local body of Christ.

The point is that commitments are essential to living with purpose.

**It is by making commitments that our lives take on a larger meaning and significance.**

## **CLOSING**

This weekend we remember the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.... whose life spoke God’s truth and heart into our nation. And he spoke of the need to continually root his work in purpose.

**“I question and soul-search constantly into myself to be as certain as I can that I am fulfilling the true meaning of my work, that I am maintaining my sense of purpose....” - Martin Luther King, Jr.**

**And he prayed...**

**“Use me, God. Show me how to take who I am, who I want to be, and what I can do, and use it for a purpose greater than myself.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.**

## **PRAYER**

### **Notes:**

1. As the title of a poignant work by Neil Postman about the modern world declared...we are “Amusing Ourselves to Death.”
2. Some further exploration of what the Bible teaches about our primary purpose.

*The Scriptures speak of those who seek and discern the purpose we were created to know. Solomon spoke of life apart from God as futility...and that life finds it’s meaning in living in alignment with God. "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).*

*Jesus lived for the clear purpose of bringing glory to God the Father... with whom He shared such glory and would return to such glory. Jesus declared that he came to "do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work." (John 4:34) As he approached the time of his sacrificial death, he said, "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? No, it is for this purpose that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Your name!" Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." (John 12:27-28) After Jesus declares to the Father glorify Your name, the Father responded that He has glorified His name, meaning the name of the Father has been glorified in the obedient life of Jesus, and the Father says He will glorify it again in the death of Jesus. In fact, the ultimate evidence of obedience in Jesus' life was His obedience to go to the death willingly, even to the point of death on a cross. (Philippians 2:8-10) As Jesus expressed in prayer to the Father as the end of his life, "I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began. (John 17:4-5, NLT)*

*After the man, who would become known as the Apostle Paul, had encountered the risen Christ, he looked at what all his empty religious life had brought, and concluded it was worth nothing, and wanted only to "know Christ" and join in his resurrected life, even if that meant sharing in his sufferings. (Philippians 3:9-10)*

*As the Westminster Confession surmises, "The purpose of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."*

*It is helpful to realize that God's ultimate purpose to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever," can guide our lives, even while we continue to seek God's more specific plans for our lives. We should seek God's further guidance along the path of life through wisdom and leading of the Spirit sent to dwell in us, while knowing that our ultimate purpose is always to glorify and enjoy Him. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)*

3. The Bible teaches the concept of personal responsibility. The very description of Adam and Eve trying to hide from God and then trying to direct blame for their choices is a clear picture of what God calls us to face.

And when Cain kills Abel, we read: The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." (Genesis 4:6-7)

This principle of personal responsibility is expressed clearly in Ezekiel 18:20: "The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them." Personal responsibility is closely related to the law of [sowing and reaping](#) ([Galatians 6:7-8](#)). "Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done" ([Isaiah 3:10-11](#)).

Whenever someone came to Jesus with a question or wanting to become his disciple he gave them something to do. He would not do something for people what they needed to do for themselves and was willing to let them walk away without receiving help if they would not do their part, as he did in the case of the Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:22).

There are two very similar parables that Jesus taught which reflect the nature of personal responsibility. They are found in [Matthew 25:14-30](#) and [Luke 19:11-27](#). In these parables, we hear that 1) people were made responsible for a master's resources, 2) there was a day of reckoning when these stewards were to give an account, and 3) they were rewarded or punished based upon how they had handled their

responsibilities. Likewise for us, there will be a day of reckoning and we commonly call it the judgement day. [Romans 14:10-12](#) says, "...For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God".

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." - 2 Corinthians 5:10

And perhaps the most personal of examples, is when Jesus is recommissioning Peter, Peter asks about one of the other disciples. And Jesus replies; When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." (John 21:21-22)