

Novelist Leo Tolstoy (*War & Peace*) asked this: “My question, the one that brought me to the point of suicide when I was fifty years old, was a most simple one that lies in the soul of every person, from a silly child to a wise old man. It is the question without which life is impossible, as I had learnt from experience. It is this: what will come of what I do today or tomorrow? What will come of my entire life? Expressed another way the question can be put like this: why do I live? Why do I wish for anything, or do anything? Or expressed another way: is there any meaning in my life that will not be annihilated by the inevitability of death which awaits me?”

Friend, why do you live? What is the meaning of your life? What is the purpose of God? What is your purpose? You know, so many people lack purpose. They don’t know what they are living for. Suicide rates are at an all time high. / The macro ingredients of a balanced diet are carbs, protein. Sociologists claim the macro ingredients of happiness are enjoyment, satisfaction, and purpose and purpose in life is the main ingredient to live a fulfilled life.¹

Meet me in the book of Ephesians. Go Eat Pork Chops. I love the book of Ephesians. Six chapters. Structured in two parts: chapters 1-3 on what God has done for us in Christ. Ch. 4-6 on what we are now to do in light of what God has done for us. Creed/conduct, position/practice, indicative/imperative. That order is really important. The Christian message is not be good, do better but you can’t but God has saved you through Christ now in light of that grace, live like this. Ch. 1-3 identity, ch. 4-6 activity. Our actions flow from our identity then our actions reinforce identity.

Identity precedes action. You gotta know who you are in Christ. Years ago, there was a Harvard study done in an elementary school in San Francisco. It was a trick on the teachers, but they made it all seem legit. These professors come in and they administer what they call the Harvard Intellectual Aptitude Test. So they give the test but the professors just throw the results aside and instead pick random kids and tell the teachers that they are on the verge of “an intense intellectual bloom”. And then they leave.

But the teachers begin to treat the selected kids differently. They’d be more patient and spend more time with them. So if little Johnny was randomly picked by the professors, then when little Johnny was having trouble with his work, the teacher would be confident and encouraging: he’s gonna get this. He’s on the verge of an intellectual bloom. And guess what? The students start to believe that they will get it, and their IQ actually raises. Who we think we are determines how we act. Identity precedes action. Knowing your identity in Christ is crucial. Ch 1-3 come first then 4-6.

Author named James Clear talks about the difference between outcome-based habit and identity-based habit. He shows that the typical way people try to change is based on outcomes. For example, someone who is trying to stop smoking. So they may refuse a cigarette by saying no thanks I am trying to quit smoking. He still identifies as a smoker but chooses a new outcome. Another may refuse a cigarette by saying no thanks I am not a smoker. Clear shows that the second guy will experience more success than the first. Identity more than outcomes. Identity precedes action. Knowing your identity in Christ is crucial. 1-3 precedes 4-6. / I want us to “trace the tens” of Ephesians: we’re going to look at Eph 1:10, 2:10, 3:10, 4:10, 5:10, 6:10 with an eye to learning the purpose of God and therefore our purpose.

1. One Ten: God does all he does for the glory of his great name. You can ask “Why does God?” A: For his glory.² **1:3-14.** / 3x: for the praise of the glory of his grace. / But Can we point a finer point on it? Yes, God’s goal is his glory. How so? **1:10.** This word for “unite” is ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι. God’s plan is to unite all things in

¹ *Build the Life*, 9.

² <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/why-god-does-everything-he-does>

Jesus Christ, to sum up all in him, to bring all things to a head in Jesus, to bring everything under the authority of King Jesus. One translation: to sum up the whole cosmos in the King.

You know the most important thing in a research paper? A thesis statement. Man, I used to be terrible at formulating a thesis statement. It's the main point. It will drive the paper. Ephesians 1:10 is the thesis statement of the book of Ephesians. To make Christ central. To unite all things in him. In fact, Ephesians 1:10 is the thesis statement of the whole Bible. Even more, the thesis statement of world history. What is God up to? Summing up all things under the authority of King Jesus. **Col 1:15-18**. Friends, if that is what God is about, what should you be about? Same.

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre says, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story do I find myself a part?'" You are part of the Father's story to bring all things to a head in Jesus Christ. All things for him.

1:20-23: God's plan is to put all things in subjection to Christ. The Father's plan is to exalt the Son. **Phil 2:9-11**. The divine architect has published his construction plan / One ten: God's plan is to put all things under Christ, to unite all things in him. Ok, so *how*? Trace the tens. 1:10, now:

2. Two Ten: God raises us with Christ to display the riches of his grace toward us in Christ **1-10**. One time a fortune teller hollered at a Christian walking by, "I will tell you your past, your present, and your future." She said, "I'm good bro, I know Eph 2:1-10. Its all there." 2:10 (**8-10**). This order is really important. You know what a preposition is? Words that express a relation to another word? To, for, by, in, at, on, of, etc. Small words but important words. We are saved – not *by* works but *for* works. We are saved by grace. God's riches at Christ's expense. By grace not works, but for works.

You are his workmanship. That word is *poiēma*. Poem. You are his craftsmanship. You are uniquely designed by God. You are God's masterpiece, his creative work. You are created in Christ Jesus and he has laid out good works for you to walk in. / Good works are things we do for the glory of God and the good of others. We don't do good works for God. God doesn't need your works, your neighbor does. The main way the NT describes these good works is in the church: using your talents, time, and treasure to build up the local church. Listen to **Matt 5:13-16**.

3. Three Ten: God displays his glory through a church as it is united in Christ: **3:9-11**. His plan is to show off his wisdom and glory through the church! This word for manifold or multi-faceted is used of flowers or cloth: polychrome, intricate beauty.

God shows this wisdom through the church? What is the church? Its really an important question. Mack Stiles says a *healthy church* is "a cross-focused, gospel-proclaiming, Bible-drenched church of baptized believers, covenanted together to care for each other in gospel love as a display of God's glory under the leadership and teaching of the elders, who studiously practice the commands of the Bible for the church."

Verse 11 says the church was God's *eternal* plan. Can you believe that? Before God created the world, his heart was set on the church. Friends, increase your view of the church. Elevate it. She is the body of Christ. Jesus is the head. There is no decapitated discipleship. Friends, make God's plan A your plan A. / College students: prioritize that which God prioritizes (parachurch) / The local church is the greatest cause on earth.

Sam Emadi: “The local church is essential; it stands at the center of God's redemptive activity in the world. The church is an embassy of a coming heavenly kingdom - a foretaste of future glory. Next time you gather with your church around the word of God to pray, to sing, and to partake of the bread and the cup, remember that your ordinary assembly testifies to God's extraordinary work of redemption that will culminate in the new heavens and new earth. When you gather with your church, you are a people of the future - part of a new humanity that will inherit an eternal kingdom when Christ comes again.”

4. Four Ten: Jesus plans to fill the world with his presence - **4:10**. The one who descended from heaven to earth and then ascended back to heaven from earth. That's Jesus. He came from heaven, became a man, died, was buried, raised, ascended to the right hand of God. See that word there: *that*. That's what we call a purpose clause: “so that.” Jesus came and ascended for a purpose. Many purposes, but here: to fill all things. NLT: “And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.” This is what we saw in 1:10, right? This is the goal. This is the play. Christ over all. How? How does 4:10 happen? Through 3:10. Christ fills all things through the church: **1:22-23** – He wants to fill every place through his people with his presence. How? *Through us, through every member ministry*: **4:11-16**.

5. Five Ten: Life is short so seek to please the Lord - **5:10**. Life is short so live for Christ. **5:1-17**. / Be a godly spouse and parent **5:22, 25, 32, 6:1-4**.

6. Six Ten: It will be hard to live for Christ, but you have what you need - **6:10-20**. We have an enemy. This world is enemy-occupied territory. The demonic realm would have you believe there are no such thing. That's one of the best enemy tactics: convince your opponents they have no opponent. “Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves.”³ CSL: every square inch and every split second is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.

You may say, the devil and demons are not my problem. Look back at **2:1-2**. You say I never followed the devil. But we all did before coming to Christ. And if you have not yet followed Christ, you are. Even if you are not doing so self-consciously. Anton LaVey is the founder of the church of Satanism. He says, “We don't worship Satan, we worship ourselves using the metaphorical representation of the qualities of Satan. Satan is the name used by Judeo-Christians for that force of individuality and pride within us.”⁴ Self-focus, individuality, and pride are Satanic.

How can you overcome? He tells us right here. The armor of God. You have what you need in Christ. Victory is ours in Christ Jesus / You know about D-Day? WWII. The date was June, 6, 1944, and the allies had finally invaded Normandy. It was called D-day and it was the decisive battle of the war. The beachhead was established and everyone knew the allies were the victors. But the final overthrow of the Nazi regime wouldn't occur until May of 1945, almost a year later. After D-day, there was never any question as to how the war would end, but there was still lots of fighting to be done. V-Day was guaranteed, but there would still be fighting, suffering, death, and agony. In fact, more people would die after D-Day than before, but the outcome was never in doubt.

The Christian life is living between God's D-day and V-day. The decisive victory has occurred at the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus Christ has guaranteed our forgiveness of sins and God's new world, but we still

³ *Signature Classics*, 203.

⁴ *The Secret Life of a Satanist* in Tyson and Silk, 21-22.

have to wage war. The second coming of Christ will be V-Day, but it is not here yet. We live in between the times, in between God's victory, and the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises. And how are we to live? 1:10 Christ over all 2:10 not saved by works but for works 3:10 the church is the center of the eternal plan of God 4:10 Christ plans to fill the universe with his presence through the church 5:10 life is short so go all in for the glory of Christ 6:10 its going to be a battle, but victory belongs to the Lord.