

# ***Made for More***

## **1. *More of Jesus***

**February 20-21, 2021**

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Text: Ephesians 1 (:22-23)

Welcome to this year's Spiritual Growth campaign called *Made for More*. We're looking at what the book of Ephesians tells us about how to step into the life calls us to. If you have a Bible or an app, you can turn to Ephesians 1. Today, I am going to be reading from the New Living Translation.

Did you ever join a conversation that was already going on and not understand what people were talking about? Or come in on the middle of a story and not know what's going on? My first official date with Linda was to a newly released movie called *Star Wars – A New Hope*. That was the first *Star Wars* movie to be released, but it's actually Part 4 of the saga, which meant that we were coming in on the middle of a story. The filmmakers tried to bring us up to speed with the opening crawl, but still, at the beginning of the movie, we didn't really understand what was going on. [Picture shown on the big screen.] Why are the guys in the white armor storming the ship? Who is the guy in the black cape, and why is he breathing so loud? Why is the Princess in trouble, and what is she princess of? [Picture shown on the big screen.] As the movie went on, we started to understand what role the different characters played. We understood that the Stormtroopers in the white body armor were basically disposable extras, while the little robot droid on wheels would play a big role in the story. And in the next movie, we all gasped when we learned that the guy in the black cape was actually Luke Skywalker's father. If you're one of the few who have never seen *Star Wars*, you don't understand what I'm talking about right now. And that is my point. To understand what's happening and who plays what role in a story, we need to know what has already happened.

You and I have joined an eternal story that is already in progress. This story is unfolding in real time right now all around us. It's God's story of his purposes on the earth. Everyone in the world is born into this story, and some are born again into it. The story started at the creation of the world. It reached its decisive turning point when Jesus rose from the dead. And it will culminate when God re-creates the heavens and the earth. I'd say the story has a happy ending, except that it will never end. We need to know what's happening in God's story in order to understand the story of our lives.

If you have ever asked yourself, "What is the purpose of my life? Why am I here on the earth?" you are not alone. At some point, we all want to know why we are made. If we try to discover why we're made by looking at ourselves, we'll never find the answer. But when we start by looking at God's story, then the meaning of our lives can fall into place. So, to understand our purpose, we first need to understand God's purpose. What is God doing on the earth? And then, what part am I to play? That's what this growth campaign is all about.

The book of Ephesians tells us that God has created us with a specific purpose in his story. That is: **We are made to do life with God. *Ephesians 1:4-5 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in***

*his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.* (NLT) Let's let this sink in. Before there were oceans or atmosphere, trees or mountains, God chose us to be *adopted* as his *children*. We were **adopted**. That means once we were not his children, and now we are through faith in Jesus. **John 1:12** says that when we trust in Jesus, we *become* children in God's family.

Adopted children are *chosen* by their parents. Adoptive parents make a conscious choice to say, "We want that child to be our son/daughter." It's possible to have a child without planning it. But no one adopts a child by accident. It's an intentional choice. And **verses 4-5** say *Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us... [he] decided in advance to adopt us into his own family.* That describes God's purpose for us -- to love us and to bring us into his family. If you ask adoptive parents, "Why did you adopt this child? What is this child's *purpose*?" they would wonder why you ask such a strange question. The answer is obvious. "We adopt this child to love him and for him to love us, so we can live as a family."

God adopted you for the same reason: **v.5: This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.** It's very simple. It makes God happy to have you part of his family. We put pictures of our family where we can see them because it makes us happy to be reminded of them.

This is my home screen. [Picture shown on the big screen.] That's my wife, Linda, on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem from our trip a couple of years ago. It makes me happy every time I open my computer and see it. Linda and I have these pictures of our kids and grandkids sitting next to our fireplace. [Pictures shown on the big screen.] It makes me glad every time I look at them. Someone said, "If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it." You are created to know him, to be in his family, and to do life with him. As I said in the Christmas Eve message, *the main point of life is to do it with God. If we're not doing life with God, then we will feel that something is missing – because we are made for more.*

Sometimes we think our purpose is to do some particular task or mission for God. That's only partly true. We are not made for life FOR God, we're made for life WITH God. God didn't create you because he needed staff. He created you to be his son or daughter. We're not created to work a certain job. We're here to work a job WITH GOD. Our purpose is not just to raise a family. It's to raise a family WITH GOD. We're not here just to help the poor or to solve societal problems or to have fun. We're here to do those things WITH GOD. Being with him is the point.

Now, because we're his children, God also includes us in his purposes in the world. And verses 9-10 refer to his plan. **Ephesians 1:9-10 - God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ — which is to fulfill his own good plan. <sup>10</sup> And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ — everything in Heaven and on Earth.** This is where the story of the world is going: God is bringing all things under Christ.

**Philippians 2** says, *"Every knee will bow, every tongue proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord."* All governments and businesses will acknowledge Jesus is Lord. All families and communities will follow Jesus as Lord. Even the oceans and the weather will reflect Jesus is Lord. And as his children, we are called to play a part in making that a reality.

**Ephesians 2** will tell us more about our calling and how it flows out of our purpose. We'll look at that next week. Today, **Ephesians 1** tells us that our primary purpose is to do life WITH God and describes a little of what life WITH God looks like.

Ten years ago, almost to the day, I had a cardiac arrest while working out at the gym. I had heart bypass surgery a few days later. When I was waking up after surgery, Linda was there. I didn't know it for a while, though. When I started to regain consciousness, I realized that she was holding my hand. I couldn't get my eyes open to see her, but I heard her voice, and I felt the grip of her hand in mine. Then for a brief moment, I was able to open my eyes and see that she was there.

Jesus promised, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the age." He is always with us. But sometimes we aren't aware of it. If we're going to do life with God, we need the eyes of our hearts to be open to the reality that God has us in his grip. And that is just what Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers. **Ephesians 1:18-19** *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe.* Those verses describe what it looks like to do life WITH God. **When we do life with God, we... approach today with hope.**

Ben Roethlisberger has been the Steelers' quarterback for 17 years and led them to a lot of wins, including two Super Bowl victories. [Picture shown on the big screen.] Over his career, he has led the Steelers to 35 comeback wins and 46 game-winning drives in his career. You could never count the Steelers out as long as Big Ben was in the game. On November 8<sup>th</sup>, Ben hurt his knee early in the game, and the Steelers' offense couldn't score. But he came back into the game in the second half to throw three touchdown passes and win it. As long as Ben was in the game, the Steelers had hope. On the other hand, when Ben was injured for the season after just two games in 2019, fans assumed that any hope for another Super Bowl went down with him. And that turned out to be correct.

As long as we know that God is WITH us, in our lives, we will have hope. So, Paul prays the eyes of our hearts would be opened. **v. 18** *that you may know the hope to which he has called you.* If our eyes are on the pandemic, we might lose hope. But when our eyes are opened to Jesus with us, we have hope for the future. If our focus is on the polar vortex or a conflict at home, we can get discouraged. But when we know that the God who rules over weather is with us, we have hope.

When we live today WITH God, then hope can grow in us. No matter what situation we're in, we can have hope because God has given us so many amazing promises! Whatever challenge we face, there is a promise for that.

When we're facing a situation that doesn't seem to have a good answer, God promises us wisdom in **James 1**. When we are mourning a loss and grieving, God promises to comfort us in **Matthew 5**. Even if we're facing death, we can have hope of Heaven. In **John 14:1-3**, Jesus says, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.* I don't know what you're facing today, but I pray that the eyes of your heart will be opened to know the hope you have because God is *with you*.

**When we do life with God, we... claim our inheritance.** When the Landau brothers' mother passed away, they inherited the contents of her house. They boxed some of it up and stored it in the basement. One of the items was a painting which had hung in their grandfather's house for years. [Picture shown on the big screens.] It pictured a woman passed out on a chair. When the brothers decided to set up a ping-pong table in the basement, they needed to clear some space. So, they decided to sell the boxed items, including the painting. At the estate auction, bidding on the painting quickly blew past the original estimate of \$800. Then it went to six figures. It finally sold for \$1.1 million. Turns out the painting was an early work from a certain Dutch master artist named Rembrandt. The Landau brothers had no idea what they had inherited. And neither do we realize what we have inherited from God our Heavenly Father. That's why Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts would be opened. **v. 18 that you may know...the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.** Because we are his children, we receive what's his.

We can't know today *all* that God has in store for us as his children.

**1 Corinthians 2:9** *"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" -- the things God has prepared for those who love him.* Most of our amazing inheritance will be revealed only when we are face to face with God in Heaven, although we can discover other parts of our inheritance as we follow Christ.

**Ephesians 1:14** *The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised.* The Holy Spirit is given to us when we choose to follow Christ. That means God himself comes to dwell with us and in us. And that is the greatest inheritance of all.

When my father passed away a few months ago, I reflected on what I inherited from him: some physical traits, sure, but so much more. From a value of clear thinking to an appreciation of fine music and a respect for all kinds of people cultures from around the world. Those values shaped me. And I would not be who I am today without the legacy he left me through who he was. When we do life with God, we're starting to receive our rich inheritance. He becomes our treasure. He imparts himself to us as we do life with him.

Finally, **when we do life with God, we... tap into God's great power.** One of the most popular ads of the 2011 Super Bowl was a Volkswagen commercial featuring a little kid dressed up as Darth Vader attempting to use the power of "the Force" around the house. [Clip shown on the big screens.] Just as that little kid could do nothing without his father's involvement or help, we can do nothing apart from the power of our Heavenly Father at work in us. And God makes his power available to us! Paul prays **v. 19 that you may know...his incomparably great power for us who believe.**

Nothing compares to God's power. It can raise the dead. And it is available to us! We don't need any more power. We just need to be aware of the power we already have. When we say, "I can't," God says, "I can." As we do life with God, we will see his power at work in many ways. You are made for more than just existing. We are made to do every day of our lives with God. And every one of us can be successful in life because we can all fulfill that purpose, no matter what our income level, nationality, or appearance. We can all do life with God and treasure him above all.