

Man's Purpose & Calling – OT
Men's Summit – June 4th, 2022

Our Purpose & Calling are given to us from our Creator – and so we look to God's creation of Man as the starting point to discern our own "purpose & calling"

Adam: Our Old Testament Example

- Adam serves as an archetype for us as we consider our purpose and calling

Gen. 1:26-28 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them **have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."²⁷ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and **subdue it; have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

- The root of our purpose as a man is found in our "God given purpose" as a human – **to have dominion over creation** – this is not unique to us as "men" as it equally applies to women, but we each approach this purpose slightly differently and ultimately learn to work together to fulfill God's purpose for us.

- Dominion speaks of authority, ruling over. This authority was "given" to man, not "taken" by man. In other words, he didn't get this authority by conquering but by appointment. God appointed Him – He is thus a "Steward" of God and all that he does flows from this basic fact.

As a steward we don't work or use our God given authority to our own personal advantage. i.e. not for our own profit or gain. But rather we wield our authority for the blessing of others and to the glory of God. But our sin nature subverts this divine mission.

Two types of authority – “Lording Over” – “Serving”

Matthew 20:25-28 - ²⁵ But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Because of Man’s fallen nature, we are selfish and self-seeking. This leads us to lead by dominance, by lording over, by demands and seeking what we want first regardless of what is right, or what is best for others. Christ contrasts His way of leading with this and set the example of service (John 13:12-17 – washing the disciples feet)

The idea of Gen 1:26-28 is that our “dominion/rule/authority” would lead to abounding fruitfulness. Because of Sin, fruitfulness is no longer as easy or as effortless as it may have once been. Our fruitfulness can wane due to **distraction, neglect, misguided efforts, too much concentrated effort in one area over another**, or just simply **not knowing what you are doing**. In fact it seems much easier to fail than anything else!

So how do we overcome this? How do we grow in fruitfulness and fulfill God’s purpose for us?

To begin to answer this, let’s look at **Adam’s Calling**

Gen 2:15 - Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

ASK: What does it mean to “Tend” something?

- simply, to take care of it,
- to cultivate it, to cause it to grow and become increasingly healthy, strong and profitable
- by implication, you have to know what it needs in order to properly care for it

This is where we are given our God-instilled desire to “Explore”. Exploration comes from the idea of discovery, to seek to know and understand something. To observe it and see how it functions.

- but our exploration goes “deeper” than pure scientific observation – we can also dive into the “**design**” of things. In other words, the ability to see and understand

what God’s purpose is for something (someone) and seek to implement that knowledge into how we “care” for it. (leafy greens vs. grain crops)

ASK: What does it mean to “Keep” something?

- some translations helpfully translate this as to “guard” or “watch over”
- this gives us the divine prerogative of protection

In essence, Adam was called by God to exercise authority over creation by caring for it, understanding what it needs, what it does, what it would be good for, what its purpose is, etc. and to cultivate it towards increased fruitfulness. And while doing this he was to also keep a watchful eye to guard and protect it from harm or anything that would intrude to impede or diminish its fruitfulness or from fulfilling its divinely designed purpose.

Modern Contextualization

Let’s bring these principles and concepts into our modern setting. What we read of Adam’s role to tend and keep were directly related to the Garden God had put him in. But they extend to ‘all creation’ that God had put mankind over.

Here’s where it gets personal – If this principle applies to you (i.e. you are now in Adam’s shoes) **how do you identify your role in your sphere of influence**. In other words, we can broadly say that all of mankind is responsible to exercise the role of authority and dominion over all the earth. But **what are You chiefly responsible for? Where does the sphere of your authority reach and where does your calling, your responsibility, to “tend & keep” come into play?**

We could look at our work or vocation to gain some perspective on this, or we could just as easily look at our homes. (i.e. wife, kids, property, etc) But there is one application that hits much closer to home, something deeply personal. **And that is You!** Just as God created the garden and put man in a role to oversee it, (along with all of creation) man must also learn to “rule himself”. There are two aspects of this that would be good for us to tease out.

1. Our “Self-Rule” is truly just another way of saying that we submit ourselves back to God’s rule. Seeking His will first for our lives. Seeking to put His kingdom first. (Rom 12:1-2 – living sacrifice, Luke 22:42 – not my will, Matt 6:33 – seek first) – **Acknowledging God’s Authority**

2. The second aspect of this is to recognize the area of self-discipline and self-control.

- Self-discipline has in mind the idea of **intentionally challenging ourselves to “grow in godliness”** by choosing to invest our time and energy in a way that pushes us towards the goal of Christlikeness. (1 Tim 4:7-8 – exercise towards godliness) - **Tend**

- Self-control has in it the idea of **keeping ourselves from evil**. Knowing yourself, your weaknesses and shoring up your defenses. (Gal 5:22-23 – Fruit of the Spirit, 2 Cor 12:9 – strength through weakness) - **Keep**

The degree that we learn how to govern ourselves under the Lord’s direction will affect our ability to govern other things well. (Prov 25:28 – rules own spirit, 1 Tim 3:4-5 – rules own house well) This is perhaps one of the chief aims of child-rearing. As our kids grow we are seeking to help them to grow in responsibility for themselves, to be able to apply the same set of biblical truths to increasingly complex situations in life. (Contrast my daughters if time allows)

But a challenge we all face once our “independence” is gained is that our liberty can begin to lead us to sin. (Gal 5:13 – do not use lib. as op for flesh, 1 Peter 2:16 – using lib as a cloak for vice). **Our maturity and our allegiance to Christ may not be formed enough to handle the onslaught of the world’s pleasures.** This is where the brotherhood, the body of Christ, comes in. We are called to come alongside one another, to bear up one another, and to push one another along in this race and towards that upward call in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion

As we consider God’s **authority** over us, and our **submission** to Him, we learn better how to **exercise** His ‘given authority’ to us both as an expression of **self-governing** (ie. Self-discipline, self-control) as well as in our immediate **spheres of influence** (i.e. family, home, work, community, etc.) In each of these areas we can take a step back and **look at God’s design**, His **purpose** and **plan**, and then seek to know **how to best implement strategies that will increase fruitfulness** that cause the greatest amount of good to others. And as we **do this**, we shouldn’t seek to do it alone, but rather **in community**. As husband and wife, or friend to friend. As co-laborer and as a part of the body of Christ. Thus we gain from the collective wisdom of others what we could not know all on our own. God intended us for community, first with Him, and secondly with fellow followers of Christ.

Questions for Application & Discussion

1. What areas do you find easiest to “tend and keep”?
2. What areas do you find the most difficult to “tend and keep”?
3. What are the dangers that you see the need to protect from?
4. What has been your experience with self-discipline (physically, spiritually)?
5. What areas do you consider yourself strong in (with regards to self-control) and what areas do you see vulnerability in?
6. What are some ways that you can shore up those vulnerable areas?
7. How has/can the body of Christ help you in your desire to better fulfill your role and calling as a man of God?