



Understanding Your Purpose

Do you know what you are here on earth for—your purpose? When you follow Jesus, it is something bigger than what you see with your eyes, but at the same time something that is right in front of you.

After his suffering, Jesus spent time with his followers and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3, 7-8). Then before Jesus ascended back to heaven, he mapped out for his followers the impact they would have on the world. Once Jesus told them, “If you love me, you will obey my commands.” Now three times Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?” Peter answered, “Yes, you know that I love you” (John 21).

1. What was implied when Jesus responded to Peter, “feed my lambs, tend my sheep?” What was important to Jesus?

[Watch scene: Final Instructions. Listen for the assignments Jesus gives his followers.]

- *What struck home most as you watched?*
- *What questions emerge for you (to be considered later)?*

My Sheep

The term Jesus used to describe his followers.

John 10:1-30

(Psalm 23)

Matthew 25:31-33

1 Peter 5:2-4

Understanding the Task Ahead

Discovering our purpose in the world is closely tied to understanding Jesus’ mission in this world. It was focused on people.

2. Put yourselves for a moment in Jesus’ sandals. What did he see when he looked at the people around him?

Matthew 9:35-38 *Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

- It is estimated that 4.5+ billion people in the world do not know Christ or do not claim to follow him. Who are those people? What are they like?
 - What about the ones near you on a regular basis? Who are they? What do they need?
3. Discuss what you believe happens to those who do not know or follow Christ.

Acts 4:10,12 *It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.... ¹²“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”*

John 3:16-18 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

- How does (should) this knowledge impact your concern or relationship with others?

The Great Commission

When Jesus first called Peter, Andrew, James, and John (the fishermen), he said, "Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Jesus calls us to follow him. Now what?

4. Explain the different dimensions of the mission Jesus gives to his followers. Underline the commands and circle the promises. Then summarize what this means for our mission:

Ascension

Jesus returns to his glory in heaven

John 17:1-5
Acts 1:1-11

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Luke 24:45-49 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power."

Acts 1:3,8 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God... ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

1 Peter 2:9,12 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light... ¹²Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 3:15-16 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Who me?

When we start looking at the task ahead we revert to Peter's doubts, feelings of inadequacy and fears. Who am I that you would choose me? Realize that God's first announcement of his birth was to shepherds, whom Jewish society didn't highly esteem. His first announcement that he has risen was to the women. And look at those Jesus chose as his close followers to spread his message. They were fishermen, a tax collectors, and zealots—ordinary people who seemed unlikely to lead a movement that hasn't stopped spreading—extending the great kingdom of God worldwide.

5. What do you suppose is God's purpose in working through ordinary people?

Acts 4:13 *When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*

1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5 *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...²⁶Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong...*

2 Corinthians 4:5, 7, 13-15 *For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake....⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us....*

Romans 12:4-6 *For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.*

- What "ordinary" people do you know who exemplify the great things God can accomplish?
- Recall the amazing things God has done in your life to reveal his grace, power, and glory.
- Discuss how you fit together like a body to be for others God's hands, feet, ears to carry out HIS mission in this world.

The Powerful Resources We Have

We were created for something greater than ourselves. We also rely on someone greater than us: God who has unlimited, unforeseen resources to make it happen. Nothing is impossible with God.

6. Describe the powerful tool Jesus has given us and how it further defines our purpose.

Romans 1:1-4, 16-17 *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—²the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, ⁴and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.... ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

Means of Grace

The gospel in Word and Sacraments.

📖 John 14:25-26; 16:12-13 *“All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.... ^{16:12}“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

📖 2 Timothy 3:14-17 *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The Word

is like a seed
planted in
hearts.

Matthew
13:1-12,
18-23

Jesus told his followers: *“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven (Matthew 10:27-32).*

At the Pentecost festival, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit as promised. The disciples’ hearts became consumed with making the grace and glory of God known in the person of Jesus for all nations. Peter, who had previously crumbled under pressure and denied even knowing Jesus, now stood up against those who would silence them. *“Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).* He confidently told those who opposed them that *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).* The impact of their message became obvious. The small seed of the gospel was scattered and spread throughout the world—not a new system of religion but a relationship with Jesus who was the fulfillment of everything we need before God ... everything we need for life ... is Life itself. Christian churches rose up in Africa, in France, in India and China. All the disciples except John were stoned, beaten to death, or crucified for their faith—a treasure so important and valuable to them that they would give up all to have it. Their eyes were on what is unseen—their relationship with God through Christ and their treasure in heaven that is there because of him.

Finding the Hidden Treasure

Matthew
13:44-46
6:19-21,33

7. Evaluate why there is frequently no sense of urgency today for this task/command of Jesus.
8. What can we (you) do about it?

Put it into Practice

- Look at the people around you. Who most needs to learn more about Jesus?
- Discover the unique gifts God has given you to advance his work in this world? How will you apply them?
- Determine the part you will play in having this message reach your city, our country, the world.

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