

What on Earth Am I Here For?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3rd0ow_P2s

Small Group Session #1: You Matter to God

I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born. Isaiah 44:2

The Question of Existence: Why am I alive?

Why was I born? Was it only to have trouble and sorrow, to end my life in disgrace? (Jeremiah 20:18)

Some approaches people use to find meaning in life:

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

"You were made by and for God's purposes, and until you understand that, life will never make sense."

The Lord has made everything for his own purpose. (Proverbs 16:4)

God created me to _____.

Long before [God] laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love... (Ephesians 1:4)

The Question of Significance: Does my life matter?

My work all seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose at all. (Isaiah 49:4)

I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born. (Isaiah 44:2)

You, [God], saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book! (Psalm 139:16)

His plans endure forever; his purposes last eternally. (Psalm 33:11)

"Life is preparation for eternity."

I was made to _____.

When this tent we live in – our body here on earth – is torn down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in, a home he himself has made, which will last forever. (2 Corinthians 5:1)

The Question of Intention: What is my purpose?

Why did you create us? For nothing? (Psalm 89:47)

"The only way to know your purpose is to ask your Creator."

Knowing God results in every other kind of understanding. (Proverbs 9:10)

I find my purpose _____.

For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible...everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. (Colossians 1:16)

"Life is not about you; it's all about God."

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for...part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone. (Ephesians 1:11-12)

It makes no difference who you are or where you're from – if you want God and you are ready to do as he says, the door is open. (Acts 10:35)

Discussion Questions:

1. What new insight did you gain from the video segment?
2. What have been some of your failed attempts to find meaning and purpose in life?
3. Do you live with an eye on eternity? What are some hindrances to living with an eternal perspective? How would your life be different if you really viewed it a "preparation for eternity?"
4. What difference would it make if you acted like life is all about God and not about yourself?
5. How does knowing God has plans for you help you discard your own plans and turn your life over to Him? Specifically, what do you sense God is calling you to do?

Session #2 Worship—You Were Planned for God's Pleasure

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unSHVQy2rMw&t=127s>

Rev. 4:11 You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."

Loving God back is called _____.

I. How Do We Live a Life of Worship, a Life Pleasing to God?

"Therefore I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:1,2 (NIV)

1. You must _____ yourself to God. (v. 1)

- Worship is _____
- Worship is _____

"Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home of the Holy Spirit God gave you, and that he lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God because he owns it." 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 (LB)

- Worship is _____

Exodus 34:14 ... for he is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.

Hosea 6:6 I want you to be merciful; I don't want your sacrifices. I want you to know God; that's more important than burnt offerings.

Romans 6:13 ... give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.

1 John 4:19 We love each other as a result of his loving us first.

Psalm 139:1-3 You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me.
[2] You know when I am resting or when I am working, and from heaven you discover my thoughts. [3] You notice everything I do and everywhere I go.

Col. 3:2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Matthew 6:6 "Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

Psalm 105:4 Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.
Worship is using my _____ for God.

Col. 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

Romans 12:1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. You have just heard that the life lived for God's pleasure is the good life. Why is that such a radical statement in light of our culture?
2. When you hear the word "worship," what is the first thing that comes to mind? Have someone read aloud Romans 12:1. How does this verse define worship?
3. *The Bible says God created you so He could love you, enjoy you, and adopt you into His family. Stop and ponder that statement for a moment. How does that make you feel and is it consistent with your view of God?
4. According to Matthew 22:37, what is God's greatest priority for your life? How does this compare to what you see in your own life?

SESSION #3 FELLOWSHIP—YOU WERE FORMED FOR GOD'S FAMILY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hHJpPFhW7g&t=30s>

"...I am writing these things to you...[so] you will know how to live in the **family** of God. That family is the church of the living God...." 1 Timothy 3:14,15 (NCV)

Ephes. 1:5 His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.

John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

John 13:34-35 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. [35] Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

The fellowship of _____ together.

Acts 2:44 And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had.

Hebrews 10:25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.

1 Peter 4:9 Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

- Share experiences
- Share support

The Fellowship of _____ together.

Ephes. 2:19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

Romans 12:5 so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.

1 John 4:21 And God himself has commanded that we must love not only him but our Christian brothers and sisters, too.

The fellowship of _____ together.

1 Cor. 3:9 For we are partners working together for God...

Ephes. 4:16 Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

The fellowship of _____ together.

Galatians 6:2 Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.

1 Cor. 12:26 If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts share its suffering.

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to each other like a loving family.

1 John 3:16 We know what real love is from Christ's example in dying for us. And so we also ought to lay down our lives for our Christian brothers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Christian life involves more than believing; it also involves belonging. God wants you to be a part of His family to build relationships that are deep, satisfying, meaningful fellowship with others.

1. Read 1 Timothy 3:14,15. In the Bible, the church is described as a family. What characteristics of healthy families would be true of healthy churches or groups?
2. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:10, *"If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble."* Can you share a time in your life when other believers came to your assistance, brought you comfort, or met a need?

SESSION # 4 DISCIPLESHIP—YOU WERE CREATED TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9hkB8MxJGs>

Romans 8:29 For from the very beginning God decided that those who came to him--and all along he knew who would--should become like his Son, so that his Son would be the First, with many brothers.

Ephes. 4:15 God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

1. God uses _____ to teach us to _____ him.

Romans 5:3-4 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us--they help us learn to be patient. [4] And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady.

- **Every _____ has a _____.**

Mark 14:34 He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me."

Mark 14:36 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine."

2 Cor. 4:17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

2. God uses _____ to teach us to _____ him.

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin.

1 Cor. 10:13a But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience.

1 Cor. 10:13 ... And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.

3. God uses _____ to teach us to _____.

Matthew 6:12 ...and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.

Matthew 27:39-44

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people! They don't know what they're doing." While the crowd stood there watching Jesus, the soldiers gambled for his clothes. The leaders insulted him by saying, "He saved others. Now he should save himself, if he really is God's chosen Messiah!"

1 Peter 2:23 They called him every name in the book and he said nothing back. He suffered in silence, content to let God set things right.

- Remember God has _____ you.
- Remember God is in _____.

Genesis 50:20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Romans 8:17 And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

3.1. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Paul says the Bible is "useful." In what ways has
you found the Bible "useful" in your life? What keeps the Bible from being more
useful in your life?

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4.2. Read Romans 8:28 and James 1:2-4. How has God used circumstances
trials in your life to bring growth and Christ-likeness?

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SESSION #5 MINISTRY—YOU WERE SHAPED TO SERVING GOD

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9J328VHUKY>

2 Tim. 1:9 It is he who saved us and chose us for his holy work not because we deserved it but because that was his plan long before the world began--to show his love and kindness to us through Christ.

Ephes. 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

S.H.A.P.E. is an acronym to explain the five elements that determine what a person's ministry should be. Every believer is uniquely shaped for a particular ministry.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: The Bible clearly teaches that God gives every believer certain spiritual gifts to be used in ministry (1 Cor. 12, Rom. 8, Eph. 4). However, I believe spiritual gifts are only one part of the picture. Natural abilities that you were born with also came from God. So do your experiences and inborn personality traits. These factors were also planned by your Creator. Spiritual gifts reveal part of God's will for your ministry, but not all of it.

HEART: The Bible uses the term "heart" to represent the center of your motivation, desires, interests, and inclinations. Your heart determines why you say the things you do, why you feel the way you do, and why you act the way you do.

Another word for heart is "passion." There are certain subjects that you feel passionate about and others that you couldn't care less about. Some things turn you on while other things turn you off. That is an expression of your heart. God had a purpose in giving you your inborn interests. Don't ignore your natural interests. People rarely excel at tasks they don't enjoy doing.

ABILITIES: These are the natural talents that you were born with. Some people have a natural ability with words. They came out of the womb talking! Other people have natural athletic abilities. Exodus 31:3 gives an example of how God gives people "skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts..." in order to accomplish his purposes. In this case, it was artistic ability to be used in building the Tabernacle. It's interesting to me that musical talent is not listed as a "spiritual gift," but it certainly is a natural ability that God uses in worship.

PERSONALITY: It's obvious that God has not used a cookie cutter to create people. He loves variety----just look around! God made introverts and extroverts. He made people who love routine and those who love variety. He made some people "thinkers" and others "feelers." Your personality will affect how and where you use your spiritual gifts and abilities.

EXPERIENCES: God never wastes an experience. Romans 8:28 reminds us, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Consider five areas of experience that will influence the kind of ministry they are best shaped for: (1) Educational experiences: (2) Vocational experiences: (3) Spiritual experiences: (4) Ministry experiences: How have you served God in the past? (5) Painful experiences: What are the problems, hurts, and trials that you've learned from?

Your shape was sovereignly determined by God for his purpose, so you shouldn't resent it or reject it. Instead of trying to reshape ourselves to be like someone else, we should celebrate the shape God has given to each of us.

1 Peter 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Serve ____by serving ____.

Matthew 20:28 Your attitude must be like my own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many."

Serving like Jesus means being ____.

Matthew 20:30-32

Proverbs 3:28 Never tell your neighbors to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now.

Serving like Jesus means being ____.

John 11:41-42 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. [42] I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

1 Tim. 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

Psalms 100:2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Serving like Jesus means being ____.

John 17:4 I have shown your glory on earth; I have finished the work you gave me to do.

1 Cor. 4:2 The one thing required of such servants is that they be faithful to their master.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

1 Cor. 15:58 ... And don't hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort.

Matthew 10:42 And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."

Col. 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, [24] since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other Christians, as you still do.

Serving like Jesus means being _____.

2 Cor. 8:9 You are familiar with the generosity of our Master, Jesus Christ. Rich as he was, he gave it all away for us—in one stroke he became poor and we became rich.

Romans 3:24 God did it for us. Out of sheer generosity he put us in right standing with himself. A pure gift. He got us out of the mess we're in and restored us to where he always wanted us to be. And he did it by means of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 9:13 You will be glorifying God through your generous gifts. For your generosity to them will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ.

2 Cor. 9:11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The story of the Good Samaritan is a classic example of true ministry. Let's spend some time discussing this story and its implications for our lives.

1. Why, in your opinion, do many people walk right by opportunities to serve others?
2. To be a servant you must move against your fears. What personal fears keep you from serving others or meeting needs in your church family?

SESSION # 6 EVANGELISM—YOU WERE MADE FOR A MISSION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbF5ShqWm8E>

John 17:17 Make them holy—consecrated—with the truth; Your word is consecrating truth.

Acts 20:24 But that matters little. What matters most to me is to finish what God started: the job the Master Jesus gave me of letting everyone I meet know all about this incredibly extravagant generosity of God.

God expects me to _____people to Jesus.

2 Tim. 4:5 But you—keep your eye on what you're doing; accept the hard times along with the good; keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God's servant.

1 Cor. 9:22 ...Yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.

God expects me to _____people to Jesus.

Acts 1:8 But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power to testify about me with great effect, to the people in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, about my death and resurrection."

Why Share the gospel?

- **It's our responsibility**

Luke 12:48 But anyone who is not aware that he is doing wrong will be punished only lightly. Much is required from those to whom much is given, for their responsibility is greater.

Matthew 28:18-19 He told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and earth. [19] Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Ephes. 3:10 And his reason? To show to all the rulers in heaven how perfectly wise he is when all of his family--Jews and Gentiles alike--are seen to be joined together in his Church

- **History's inevitability**

Isaiah 14:26-27 This is my plan for the whole earth--I will do it by my mighty power that reaches everywhere around the world. [27] The Lord, the God of battle, has spoken--who can change his plans? When his hand moves, who can stop him?"

Matthew 24:14 "And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it, and then, finally, the end will come.

Five Giant Problems

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

PEACE PLAN

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Psalm 67:2 Send us around the world with the news of your saving power and your eternal plan for all mankind.

2 Peter 3:9 He isn't really being slow about his promised return, even though it sometimes seems that way. But he is waiting, for the good reason that he is not willing that any should perish, and he is giving more time for sinners to repent.

Mark 8:35 If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Last week we looked at how God wants you to have a *ministry* in His Church. Now this week, we want to look at how God wants you to have a *mission* in the world.

1. When you hear the word "evangelism" or think about sharing your faith, what images come to mind?
2. As you reflect on the story of the paralytic from Luke 5, what stands out to you?
3. The four men who brought this paralytic to Jesus were not priests or pastors; they were just friends. How comfortable are you building friendships with those who don't know Christ? What steps could you take to begin to build such friendships?
4. The physical needs of this man were obvious, but his spiritual needs were less obvious. What are some of the needs of people in your life that demonstrate a deep spiritual hunger?