

“Does Life Have A Purpose?”

“What do you want?” (*Matthew 20:21*)

In the Gospels of the New Testament, we often see Jesus asking pointed questions like the one above to expose the longing and design of the human heart. Good questions that led people to realize how they were made, and what they wanted. Good questions that ultimately only God could answer.

Before we look at this week’s Bible passage, reflect or discuss *“How do you typically go about finding purpose in life?”*

I Corinthians 7:17-24

¹⁷ Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.¹⁸ Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. ¹⁹ For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. ²⁰ Each one should remain in the condition in which he was

called. ²¹ Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) ²² For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. ²³ You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. ²⁴ So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

1. In the New Testament letter of I Corinthians, the apostle Paul is helping a new church understand Who God is, what He’s done, and the difference all that makes for us. What idea does Paul repeat most often in this passage?
2. What big point is Paul making about a person’s identity?
3. What is “calling”? What is the difference between “calling” and “vocation”? How do you know if you are “called”?
4. Read v.17 again. Why is being “called” by God more important than our circumstances, abilities, accomplishments, and failures when understanding our purpose?
5. Paul uses case studies of ethnicity (18-19) and slavery (21-23) to illustrate how we should understand our calling and purpose. Read v.22 again. Bondservants were those in the church who were identified in Corinthian society as slaves. How are bondservants to understand their identity in light of the Gospel? How are those who are free to understand their identity? Why?
6. Read v.24. Is Paul against change? What is his point in this statement?
7. What circumstances are you working hard to gain or keep? How does this passage challenge or encourage you in those struggles?
8. As a part of Sunday worship, the church confessed [Psalm 139:1-3,23-24](#) together. Read that passage and pray together as a group in response.

Going A Step Further...

- **We began this week's worship service with a *Call to Worship*** from [Psalm 8](#). This prayer of King David gives us further insight into our human value and purpose. Read Psalm 8 aloud as a group to begin a time of prayer together thanking God for His grace toward us, and the purpose He gives us.
- Each week in worship we read another Bible passage to complement the sermon text. **This week's *Old Testament Reading*** came from the creation account in [Genesis 1:26-27](#). What does it mean that we are made in God's image? If we bear God's image, how would that change the way we see our purpose and the purpose of all humanity?
- As a part of worship [we sing songs and hymns](#) that further amplify each **Sunday's message**. This week, we sang the hymn, [God is Love, Let Heaven Adore Him](#) and "*When human hearts are breaking / Under sorrow's iron rod / Then we find that self-same aching / Deep within the heart of God*" and "*Sin and death and hell shall never / O'er us final triumph gain.*" What confuses us about our purpose as human beings? What does God do about the trouble we find ourselves in?

Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
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Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on I Corinthians 7:17-24

- Today's question is: Does life have a purpose? I want to change that question a bit to ask something more personal: Does my life, does your life have a purpose? Sometimes we confuse purpose with vocation? There is a difference between what one's purpose is and what one's vocation is. We hope that our vocation, what we do, operates at the intersection of our gifts (the things we are good at) and our passions (the things we love). Our purpose is bigger.
- Let's do three things this morning. Let's look at the passage and see the source and the definition of our purpose, let's look at a few presuppositions behind this understanding of our purpose and let's look at why this biblical understanding of our purpose is good and freeing for us. The passage we read this morning gets at this.
- Paul tells us that our condition when we come to faith while important, is not as important as our union with God through and by Christ. (See verses 17, 24).
- What matters is recognizing that I am ultimately not in charge of my purpose. Note the word 'assigned'. Also that I am not autonomous but that I have been bought with a price and therefore belong to the One who bought me.
- Now, let's look at some presuppositions behind this view of life and purpose:
- First, the biblical view of people is that we are of immense value and worth because we are created in the very image of God. Genesis 1:26-27 says, "Let us make man in our image...So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."
- This passage tells us that our Creator made us, mirror-like, to image Him, to draw attention to Him, to display and represent Him. We were made to reflect God's staggering beauty and goodness so that the world can enjoy its Creator even more. The constellations in the night sky are stunning. They, too, "declare the glory of God," as does the rest of creation. But for all their dizzying, distracting beauty, the stars weren't made in God's image. Remarkably, God has gifted that privilege to us and us alone.
- The implication of this thought is that we are made to point out the glory of the One who made us.
- So does this mean that God is egocentric, if His glory is what my life is about?
- The last implication is that you and I were made to glorify, to reflect back to and on Someone. Our problem is we often find ourselves 'imaging', reflecting, glorifying much lesser things. That is why there is so much frustration, conflict and dissatisfaction in life. We will (as our passage says) enslave ourselves to the wrong things and lose the true freedom for which we were created.
- So why is this a good thing for us? By recognizing my tendency to glorify lesser things I come to grips with a few facts:
- All of us tend toward a kind of bondage. Either people and their opinions of us, the pursuit of wealth, the pursuit of the perfect relationship...
- What can free us from this tendency to bondage? It is not a what, but a Who.
- It is the One who paid the price to set you free from this tendency to bondage.