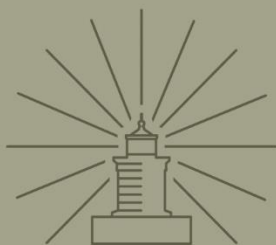




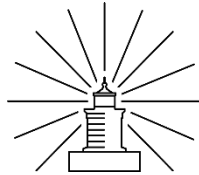
THE
MENTORING
PROJECT

WHAT IS
THE WILL OF GOD—
FINDING YOUR WAY



WILSON RAMSEY

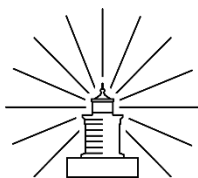
WHAT IS THE WILL
OF GOD — FINDING
YOUR WAY



WILSON RAMSEY

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INTRODUCTION

Why are you here? This question is one everyone needs to answer. Many try to dodge answering it, distracting themselves with the abundance of trifling things our world offers, but distraction only works for so long. Eventually, everyone must face the reason why are we here on this earth and ask, "what is my purpose?"

The answer to this question gives meaning to well... everything—our lives, our jobs, our studies, our relationships, our every breath. The question is massive, and the answer transforms each step of our way. Often, people spend years wondering how to find yourself or how to find your purpose in a world that feels increasingly chaotic.

In this life skill guide, we will attempt to make some sense of our purpose—of why we're here and who we're here for. We will explore what does the Bible say about life and look for Bible verses about living life with purpose to anchor our souls. To accomplish this, we will first look back to the beginning, then consider where we are, and finally look to where we're going. With God's help, I hope that by approaching these matters with God's Word in the lead, you learn more about how to live with a purpose and discover what is the will of God for your journey.

1

WHERE WERE WE?

Growing up in the Southeast of the United States, autumn and football season are interchangeable terms. Many people grow up going to games or even playing in them. The school's morale rises and falls with wins and losses. For us, when things went wrong during one of our games, my coach would say this phrase: "We've got to go back to the fundamentals!" Before we think about complicated trick plays, we needed to understand our most basic and clear duties. These are the "fundamentals" that stay consistent no matter what situation we are in. If we miss the starting point, we will end up lost down the road, wondering what is my calling and where I went wrong.

The book of Genesis works like this for the Bible. We are darkened in our understanding because of our sin and rebellion against God. Today, perhaps more than ever, we need a stable foundation. We need the words of our all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful Creator. The book of Genesis functions as a foundation for us to answer the many "whys" of life and provides the ultimate God has a plan for your life Bible verse context. Before creation, there was God. "In the beginning, God" was there—the happy, living, infinite, and uncreated God. As we move into creation's existence outside of him, we must understand that God did not need to create anything. By nature of who he is, we cannot think of him as one who "needed anything" at all (Acts 17:25). So, the triune God has existed as an eternal fountain of goodness and happiness before anything else was. Fundamentally, to be a creature is to be unnecessary. In other words, the fact that anything exists outside of God is a wonderful gift. So why do we exist? Because God was pleased to create us. This is the starting point for anyone asking what is God's plan for me.

This places humans into a submissive relationship clothed in humility. Though we steward and "have dominion" over creation, we exist underneath the One who defines all his creation. He created birds to fly,

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fish to swim, and humans with the capacity to speak and reason. There are limits to what we do and can do here on earth. Our purpose for existence is defined by the One who made us. The Creator defines and governs creation. This is the first step in learning how to know God's will.

The good news is that we know that our purpose is good because God is righteous, good, and holy. We can trust that the purpose as shown in His Word is the best purpose imaginable. Christians reasonably resign to the One who has inexhaustible and infinite knowledge of himself and all things outside himself. He is the One who made us with a good purpose. If you are feeling purposeless as a christian, return to this fundamental truth.

We learn in Genesis that terms like gravity are only descriptions of the order and preservation by the Creator. The tide of the ocean proclaims the power and wisdom of God. Beautiful diversity within creation is no longer seen as an outcome of atomic chaos but the beauty of the Designer. Mankind is set above other creatures and endowed with the image of God. Sexuality, both male and female, is a gift designed for good in this world, with creational differences to strengthen their different spheres of dominion. Marriage is not a result of sinful lust, but a God-given gift to humanity.

Even more so, God does not leave us to wander in the dark. He condescended to make a covenant with Adam. God stooped down and generously initiated a relationship with Adam and Eve that they might not only live under his rule but also in fellowship with him forever. He created them in his image to reflect him in creation. He commanded them to fill the earth with more image-bearers and have dominion over the rest of creation. This is the original purpose in different seasons of life.

By sovereign right, the creator of the universe deserves our obedience. But who we are by nature and by warm covenant relationship orients our obedience in a whole new way. Our obedience to God is not slavish and reluctant, but a dynamic, relational, and purposeful obedience within God's unfolding history to bring glory to himself. For Adam, if he obeyed, he would enjoy eternal life and fellowship with God. This remains the foundation for glorifying God in the mundane things of our daily lives.

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Reflection Questions:

1. How does the fact that God is our creator affect our relationship with him?
2. How does the fact that God is the creator impact our purpose in life?
3. How can we know that God's purposes for us are good?

2

WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?

As we read about our original design and fellowship with God, the fallen world as we know it demands the question, “What happened?” After six days of creating, God completed his work and called it “very good” (Gen. 1:31). But we look around and see brokenness within and without. Our hearts are inclined to evil. Death and disaster abound. Even with glimpses of goodness, we seem to find more about our existence to lament.

The original covenant relationship with Adam had promises and curses contingent on Adam’s obedience. If he obeyed perfectly and perpetually, he would enjoy that eternal sabbath rest with God forever. If he disobeyed by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die. As we see in Genesis 3, Adam rejected God, broke the covenant, and plunged himself and the rest of humanity under a curse and death (Rom. 5:12-21). Creation shattered into many different pieces, making it hard to see its purpose. We now walk in an upside-down and burned-over art museum. We long to make out what once was. We were created to live under God’s rule and enjoy him forever, but now, mankind forfeited this relationship with cosmic treason against their infinitely holy God. Our relationship was severed, and our punishment is eternal.

As a result, our self-understanding caved in on itself. The purpose and the meaning of life became holes in our hearts. Restlessly, we try to place things or people there, but they aren’t enough to fill what’s missing. Our sin now makes us prioritize the right things wrongly and the wrong things as if they were right. It confuses our purpose, derails our path, and distorts our end. It leaves many asking, “what is my purpose?” amidst the rubble of the Fall.

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Our fall in Adam placed us on a default path of antagonism to God, which results in our wandering and a vagabond of ideas for a purposeful life. All of which is futile. God called out Judah for these vain attempts through the prophet Jeremiah. Within Jeremiah's message, we see a keen insight into the state of our hearts after the fall.

“For my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water.” (Jer. 2:13)

Judah rejected the author and the fountain of life. He uses the phrase “living waters” as a vivid picture. God was like a natural spring, an endless supply of pure water, giving them life. God is life in and of himself. But Judah abandoned the only one who could refresh their souls. Instead, they “hewed out” or created buckets to try to catch the water they needed, except with porous rock.[1] In other words, the idols they made for themselves left them as dry and empty as when they started. Filling up but ever emptying. We lack no supply of “empty cisterns” today. When we are feeling purposeless as a christian, it is often because we have wandered toward these broken cisterns. Let's try a few.

Wealth. We obsess over whatever provides the most comfort rather than sacrificing for God and others. We seek the most financially secure way possible and then trust God, rather than trusting God to keep us while sacrificially loving. This often blurs the difference between a career and a calling. The barricaded home in the tropics is not immune to erosion or a hurricane. Irresponsible children easily squander an inheritance. Indeed, “a rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination” (Prov. 18:11). Wealth and the path of least resistance will not deliver in the day of wrath (Lk. 12:20). A life's purpose that will not last an eternity is not one worth living at all.

Power. Perhaps power is the way to live a meaningful life? Many begin with an ambition to change the world, devoting themselves to high political positions, useful friendships, or online groups. However high one climbs, the power is limited. For “No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death” (Eccl. 8:8). Even world history's most powerful are

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a small paragraph in a textbook, subject to the jokes of many high school students. “Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come” (Rev. 18:10). Earthly power will expire in influence and eventually in the memory of generations to come. The highest here are often the lowest in hell.

Self. In an age of authenticity, we may assume that the meaning of our life is self-determined. That is, each individual has the freedom to choose their own “adventure”. Many books claim to teach you how to find yourself, but they lead away from the Creator. We each live a life of self-creation as mini creators. We are the captains of our own souls. What we do, the choices we make, and the feelings we have create who we are. In other words, there is no objective purpose for reality. Everyone is radically free to determine their life’s meaning. Hence, there is no meaning. This idol crumbles into an aimless life. There is no meaning except the one everyone creates, even those at conflict with each other. In the end, this is an optimistic response after admitting that reality is truly meaningless.

Activism. At first, activism seems like the most noble of the “broken cisterns.” It seems, and may genuinely have, the world’s well-being in mind. However, in a fallen world, this is a shaky place to seek purpose. For activists, salvation often comes in the form of a ballot sheet, a political leader, an idea, or an educational system. I do not think I need to tell you that the government or a politician isn’t a safe place for your trust and the world’s salvation. Activists try to make a heaven here and now, something that will only occur when Jesus returns to purge evil once and for all.

Academics. Learning about God and his world is a noble and worthy work. However, the one who places hope and purpose in learning will sooner or later find that it is vanity. Truly, “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Eccl. 12:12). We cannot know everything, but the academic pursues as if it is possible. If memory gives way or these pursuits are hindered, what then becomes of life? Is life then meaningless?

Sensuality. Say you do not have an answer to a meaningful life, so you resolve to live for carnal pleasure all your days here on earth. Sex, party, food, luxury, and leisure typify the life of the sensual. If we do not have meaning beyond this life, then why not enjoy whatever we so please?

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Gather as much temporal euphoria amidst the unavoidable pain. If we do not have much meaning, then perhaps the meaning of life is simply to do what feels good. This kind of life either delays asking this question or denies an answer to it. The former is more common among youth. The latter is most common in those in a midlife crisis. In this life, the body withers away as one devotes to food, drink, and relaxation. Yet, experience and, ultimately, God's Word shows us that "Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man" (Prov. 27:20).

These are only a sample of the many ways fallen people search for a purposeful life. We do need to remember that these paths to meaning are not an innocent journey. Each represents an idol of the heart. Wealth becomes our place of refuge. The powerful, often less explicitly, begin to think of themselves as gods. The modern self acts as a divine lawgiver. Activists exalt institutions or governments as the healers of the nations. Academics place their reason or intellectual inventory as the solution to man's ills. The sensual bow at the feet of creaturely passions. One modern catechism puts it this way: "What is idolatry? Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator for our hope and happiness, significance and security."

Whether it be sensual pleasure or the self, these idols will burn up along with their worshipers. Their worshippers will hear the words of Jeremiah 2:28: "But where are your gods that you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you, in your time of trouble; for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah."

But what is the Christian answer? When searching for how to find your purpose, we must realize that what does the Bible say about life is centered on restoration. The Bible describes our lives before Jesus as ones "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Jesus is the answer, but perhaps not in the way you initially think. He did not come merely to give us meaning again. He came to deal with a problem far bigger. In Christ, the lost have been found, and we can begin glorifying God in the mundane things as we recover our true design.

Reflection Questions:

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1. How does Genesis 1-2 show the purpose of life?
2. What basics do you gather about reality from the first three chapters of Genesis?
3. What answers have you heard to the question, “What is my purpose in life?” How does this line up with scripture?
4. Have you noticed any “empty cisterns” in our society? Where do they fall short of God?

3

FOUND IN CHRIST

Ever since we rejected and departed from the Fountain of Living Waters, we have been lost. The paths we now walk lead us to an eternal nowhere. Sin adds an element more akin to a game of Hide-and-Seek. The “lost” are actively hiding and opposed to God. Consider how Adam and Eve “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God” after sinning (Gen. 2:8). Or, using Paul’s words, “no one seeks for God” (Rom. 3:11). Sin makes us willingly lost.

But God, rich in mercy, developed a search-and-rescue plan in eternity past to bring the lost home. We committed soul-slaughter by our sin, but as the 2nd London Baptist Confession states, “it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace.” In promise form, God announced a coming rescuer in Genesis 3:15. God’s eternally begotten Son came down from heaven, was born of a virgin in human flesh, to “seek and to save the lost” (Lk. 19:10). Salvation in Jesus provides a context for us to understand where we fit into God’s plan and reveals what is the will of God for a humanity once far from Him.

God’s Eternal Purpose

We need to consider God’s purpose before we begin to think about our own. All of history and creation center on God’s purpose to unite heaven and earth in Jesus Christ. Shockingly, those lost were never hidden from God. He chose, knew, and loved them “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). Paul returns to this idea several times to

- **Ephesians 1:9-11:** “making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been

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predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will...”

- **Ephesians 3:11:** “This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

God planned, in eternity past, a merciful redemption to save sinners. God the Son lovingly agreed with the Father to stand in the gap, communicating all saving benefits to the elect chosen by the Father in Him. The Son asked of the Father and he gave him the nations as his inheritance (Ps. 2:8). The Holy Spirit agreed to equip the Son in his mission “without measure” and apply the redemption purchased by him (John 3:34). God the Father “covenanted” to God the Son a kingdom by which he then gives to those chosen in him “before the foundation of the world” (Luke 22:29; Eph. 1:4).[1] Jesus completed the “work” from the Father for our salvation and he “shall see his offspring” (John 17:4; Is. 53:10). The salvation of God’s people is this certain.

So, what does all of this theology have to do with a purposeful life? If God has an eternal plan for creation and redemption, would it not make sense for our purpose to align with this? Our salvation is part of a bigger plan to see God’s people found and redeemed in Christ. A life centered on Jesus Christ and his will is certainly a life well lived. The question for us, then, is to ask how to know God’s will and how God accomplishes this eternal plan in the world. Once we have the correct answer, we should pour our lives into it.

Re-directed and Restored

At the start of our study, we looked at Genesis. Our beginning informs who we are and our purpose on earth. We forfeited our original purpose in the first Adam. But now in Christ Jesus, the second Adam, we are restored. We are born again with new hearts, redirected by his love, and recreated as participants in the new creation to come. This is often the point where we see signs God is redirecting your life toward His original intent. The Holy Spirit does not just correct our behavior to imitate Christ. He renews our minds to understand where we came from, where we are now, and where we are going (Titus 3:5; Eph. 4:23-24; Rom. 12:2). He destroyed the idols of our hearts that set us on paths to destruction, fixing us on the

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original and glorious purpose of all things in Christ. We are now shaped by reality, the story of Creation and Redemption. J.I. Packer summarizes it well:

The forty and more writers who produced the sixty-six books of Scripture over something like fifteen hundred years saw themselves and their readers as caught up in the outworking of God's sovereign purpose for his world, the purpose that led him to create, that sin then disrupted, and that his work of redemption is currently restoring. That purpose in essence was, and is, the endless expression and enjoyment of love between God and his rational creatures—love shown in their worship, praise, thanks, honor, glory, and service given to him, and in the fellowship, privileges, joys, and gifts that he gives to them.

God set his love on his people before time began. All of history, then, is an unfolding of this transforming love of God to his sinful people who are restored by his grace in Christ Jesus. When we ask, "what is my purpose?" we must start with this restoration.

There have been many biblical attempts to summarize the purpose of humanity. Perhaps the best one is found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism Question #1:

“Question: What is the chief end of man?”

Answer: Man's Chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

Mankind ultimately exists to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Now that we are found in Christ, we can confess with Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:6, “for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” Despite all the secondary purposes we could name, all are subordinate to the God of glory. The lives we now live we live by faith in Jesus who loved us and died for us (Gal. 2:20). The Redeemed have their lives redirected to the original purpose and end of all things: to display the glory of God.

The catechism highlights two elements of our ultimate purpose: 1) glorify God and 2) enjoy him forever. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul shows the

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obligation now set on Christians: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” This is a vital part of glorifying God in the mundane things. This is not a new command, but an old one for newly created people. God’s people “shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified” (Isa. 60:21). Glorifying God is often seen as a “Sunday school” answer that we don’t always understand completely. God has all glory in himself and does not need humans to add to his glory. God does not increase or decrease in glory. When we say we are glorifying God, we are not saying that we are making him better. We glorify God by doing all things to the end that God may be known as he truly is, supremely glorious. That is, we show how amazing God is by our loves, our thoughts, our motives, and our works. This is how to find your purpose in every action.

The second is inseparable from this. If God is the highest good, then there is no greater end for which we can be made than to revel in his goodness. We take joy in God both now and forever. This is why other purposes will never satisfy, because we were made for something infinitely better. To be restored in the image of God is to be a worshipper, a delighter, and an enjoyer of God. As David prays in Psalm 16:11, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” In the end, God shall be our God, and he will dwell with us (Rev. 21:3). God shall be our portion, and we shall delight in him without hindrance and without end. This is the ultimate fulfillment of what does the Bible say about life.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is your experience of being lost in sin and being found in Christ?
2. Does the eternal plan of God shape the way you think about reality? In what ways?
3. Why does the Covenant of Redemption provide comfort to the believer?
4. What does it mean to glorify and enjoy God? Name specific examples in your own life.
5. How do you pursue joy in God? What practices do you find helpful?
6. How does the local church help you glorify and enjoy God?

4

LIVING IN THE
PRESENT

How were you saved? Maybe your coming to Christ happened gradually. Maybe you grew up in a Christian home and don't remember a time when you weren't a Christian. Maybe you came to Christ in response to a crisis. This is good and well. However, Scripture often speaks of the double grace of gospel union with Christ, *duplex gratia* in Latin. Christians are not only declared righteous based on Christ's righteousness (Rom. 4:5) but become righteous by the work of the indwelling Spirit of Christ (Rom. 6:11). That is why the "path of the righteous", as described in Proverbs 4:18, "shines brighter and brighter until full day." This transformation is a key part of what is my calling as a follower of Jesus.

Pathway of Holiness

The pathway of holiness of every true believer is found in Isaiah 35:8:

*"⁸ And a highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.
It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
even if they are fools, they shall not go astray."*

Isaiah describes a road on which all the redeemed shall walk on their way to Zion. In the middle of all of these chapters on judgment and exile, God promises another deliverance similar to the Exodus. A redeemed remnant will be placed on a road leading to their eternal home of pure joy (Isa. 35:10). As we rightly want to protect justification by faith alone, we cannot silence verses that similarly emphasize our holiness. We need gospel understanding: "I have made you alive. Now live." In other words, there is

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not a single believer who is declared righteous and not placed on the highway of holiness. For without it, “no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

Holiness is a necessary road on which the believer must walk. Some summarize this idea like this—we are not saved by good works but for good works. This is the heart of glorifying God in the mundane things.

What is God’s purpose for me today? When tempted to despair, I sometimes ask this question as if God did not make it clear. We are called to “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col. 3:10). We ought to say, “Today, by God’s grace, I am a Christian. I am a new creature. I am one purchased by the blood of the Lamb and now have the Holy Spirit inside me to enable new gospel obedience. What is clear to me today is a purpose that transcends the mundane. It is a purpose of holiness.” This is a life worthy of the gospel.

The new pathway of holiness makes sense of many of Paul’s prayers for Christians. He wrote to the Colossians:

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy” (Col. 1:9-11).

He prays for them to know and understand how to know God's will as it applies to their lives. This is all for a walk “worthy of the Lord.” A life that looks more and more like the Jesus they are united to by faith. His prayer is for God to guide their steps on the path of holiness set before them. That is a worthwhile prayer when seeking how to find your purpose.

Greatest Privilege of Today

Anytime you think that once you are justified, you are called to a life of bare moralism, think again. In the 17th Century, one pastor-theologian meditated on the Christian life the year before his death. After decades of being a Christian and approximately eight million words he published, he summed up the greatest privilege we have here on earth:

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One of the greatest privileges a believer has, both in this life and for eternity, is to behold the glory of Christ. Only a sight of His glory, and nothing else, will truly satisfy God's people. Indeed, it is by beholding the glory of Christ that believers are gradually transformed into His image, and then brought into an eternal enjoyment of it, because they shall be 'forever like him,' for they 'shall see Him as He is' (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:1-2). On this depend our present comforts and future blessedness. This is the life and reward of our souls (John 14:9; 2 Cor. 4:6).

Later, we will discuss this vision in eternity. For now, we focus on today. What does it look like to get these "present comforts" and enjoy him now? We behold him. We live for and long for him in this life. This is how we discover what is God's plan for me. As we get to know Jesus—his excellencies, his glory, his beauty, his person, his work—we are changed.

We look to Jesus as he has been revealed in Scripture to see him as he truly is. We search the Scriptures to know him because we love him, and the more we come to know him, the more we love him. This is how to hear God's voice and how does God speak to us—through the living Word. The Holy Spirit transforms us into the one whom we behold. We begin to reflect him in the world, the very thing we were made to do. This Christ-centered vision sets our pathway ablaze with the brilliance and power of Christ in us. After all, Jesus prayed that we would do so: "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

Providential Placement

In any company, each employee plays an important role in advancing the common vision. The clearer the job description, the more peace of mind the employee has that they are doing their work properly. Each employee plays a specific part in the whole. The vision of the Christian life is far grander than that of the largest Fortune 500 company. But we often want the specifics of our job description to give us peace of mind about whether we are truly glorifying God. We often struggle to see the difference between a career and a calling, yet both are under His sovereignty. How do we know if we walk in the good works prepared for us (Eph. 2:10)?

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Our life is brief and small in comparison to the entire history of this world and the mission of God to unite a global people to himself. However, that ought not to make us think today is insignificant. The doctrine of providence implies that every individual life and moment of our lives is significant and purposeful. This is the ultimate God has a plan for your life Bible verse reality. The Heidelberg Catechism Question #27 explains:

Question: What dost thou mean by the providence of God?

Answer: The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but be his fatherly hand.

Every detail, every interaction, and every millisecond of our lives is filled with purpose because God ordained it. If we want to know the “how” of glorifying God, we have to look at the “now.” This is how we navigate purpose in different seasons of life. What areas in my life are unique to me, and how does a life worthy of the calling of the gospel shape what I think, will, and do at that specific moment? You alone may be in a particular position to encourage or evangelize that coworker. You, of all people, are called upon to patiently and lovingly care for your aging parent nearby. You are a member of that local church and called specifically to love and care for those people.

You may even feel compelled, receive affirmation from your church, and have an open door to serve as a missionary in a specific country with no church and no gospel witness. We have to discern, by the help of the Holy Spirit, what is pleasing in the sight of the Lord and hold fast to the good in each situation. Every particular is purposeful. This is part of the process of how to find your spiritual gifts.

This is the idea Paul expounds upon in 1 Corinthians 7. He says, “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.” Historically, Puritans called this idea a Christian’s “station.” Not only the decisions and position of kings, but the sibling order of infants is God’s doing. Each job,

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each ministry avenue, and each year of graduation was ordained by our all-sovereign, all-wise God. Sometimes, we see signs God is redirecting your life through these very stations.

The question is, how will we steward this providential placement? This could look like a successful businessman living off a minimal income to give maximally to a missionary team sent out from his local church. It may look like Adoniram Judson giving his entire life for Christ in Burma. It may be a student not squandering time on their phone, but diligently attending to their studies, or redeeming flexibility to take an elderly church member to a doctor's appointment. Each of us has to answer this question: How has God providentially situated me today with the talents, skills, authority, provision, and time to image Christ, serve others, and glorify him? This is how to find your passion through faith.

When we were unbelievers, we did not think this way. Things just happened. Chance and coincidence were passing comments that sparked mere curiosity. Much of life was filled with seemingly insignificant or naturally determined outcomes. Grimly, life could be reduced to a collision of atoms and chemical reactions. But by God's grace alone, Christians no longer suppress the truth. They see that even the rain comes down from the sky as God's goodness on all of humanity (Matt. 5:45). The leaf falls to the ground and the flower blossoms at the will of our Father in heaven (Matt. 6:30). Everything is a part of his plan. Nothing is arbitrary.

After laying a foundation in Christ and his word, we are not held hostage when many future decisions are on the table. Whether it's this job, that home, or that gospel-preaching church, test the heart and situation by God's Word. Waiting on God's timing for your purpose is often a part of the journey. Pray for God to grant understanding. Seek counsel from godly Christians who will do the same. Then choose away in Christian freedom for the glory of God and his kingdom.

Reflection Questions:

1. How does the "pathway of holiness" shape your prayers for yourself and others?
2. Study 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 John. 3:1-2. How does beholding Jesus change us?

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3. Is beholding Christ your greatest privilege? Why or why not? What do you think gets in the way?
4. What helps you to behold Jesus? How has this changed you?
5. Where do you see God's providence in your own life, and what helped you to make past decisions? What did you learn from that for future decisions?
6. Do you consider your "station" as divinely granted? What does that change about your "ordinary" work? How might that help you endure challenges?

5

THE END OF THE ROAD

Living in Light of the End

Living in Light of the End In my house, I often start building a piece of furniture before I even know what it's supposed to look like. More often than not, this results in confusion and even poor construction. The side of the cabinet turns out to be backwards. The one hole doesn't line up with its screw because I assumed I knew where the project was going. "It's only a table. How hard can it be?" I think. You see, knowing the end goal helps you find your way in the process. God graciously reveals a clear picture of the end to shape how we live a purposeful life in the present. This is the foundation for anyone asking how to find yourself—not by looking inward, but by looking toward the One who holds the end of the story.

In Scripture, the "study of last things" always has an impact on the way we live today. Eschatology and ethics go hand in hand. Indeed, heavenly mindedness informs our earthly steps. This last piece of our study will focus on how the future gives purpose and direction to our now. It provides the ultimate collection of Bible verses about living life with purpose.

One of the most practical chapters on our future hope embraced by faith is Hebrews 11. Many call this chapter the "hall of faith" because of the brief biographical sketches of Old Testament saints that show how their faith shaped their daily lives. As a heading, the author of Hebrews summarizes the chapter with a brief definition of faith: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The living faith of Old Testament saints presents us a picture of how future glory, assured in the present, changes everything.

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Noah built an ark of salvation by faith because God told him judgment was coming. Abraham went out to a foreign land, willing to be a stranger and a sojourner, because he took hold of the eternal city of God. Moses could suffer contempt and give up the riches of Egypt, because he counted having Christ better than anything the world had to offer. These saints and many others lived in light of what God promised. Promises of the end that they greeted from afar shaped their obedience and gave them endurance in their brief lives here on earth. Eternity changes everything.

The Return of Christ

Christ already came to bear the sins of his people, but since his ascension, we've been in a waiting period. There is, however, a day when Jesus shall not come to deal with sin but bring judgement for those outside of Christ and salvation for his people. The apostle Peter writes in his letters of the importance of keeping Christ's second coming in mind. In 1 Peter 1:13, he tells us to prepare our minds. He calls us to be sober-minded as we await the Lord's return. Peter's primary application in this section is a life of holiness. Because we are going to meet the Lord and see him as he is, we ought to live holy and watchful lives.

Peter continues this application of the return of Christ in 2 Peter 3. He encourages the saints that the Lord is not slow to fulfill this promise. In 3:10, he says the day of the Lord will come like a "thief in the night." That is, we do not know when, but we know that the day will come. In this time of waiting, we will be tempted and pulled in every direction to not consider this reality. However, the fact that we are on the brink of eternity demands a life of readiness and wakefulness as we wait for our faith to turn to sight—when we shall finally meet him who has loved us so richly. This is our purpose, and it informs the Great Commission as our primary purpose while we wait.

Everlasting Inheritance

The book of Ephesians contains grand language to describe the riches of grace we have in Christ Jesus. Paul sets our adoption and glorious inheritance in heaven before us. If we have a rich inheritance in the future, why cling so foolishly to our earthly wealth? Why be a slave to a retirement account when heaven's glory awaits? Jesus commands this thinking

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among his disciples, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:19-21; See also 1 Tim. 6:19). The pure, lasting, and heavenly treasure at the end of the road transforms his people to radical, generous givers in the present age.

Resurrection Bodies

Life is much more than our physical bodies. Because Christ Jesus was raised from the dead, we also will rise like him. He was the first fruits, and from him we too have “the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. 15:21). On the last day, we will receive a body no longer subject to the curse. The Lord promises there will be no more chronic illness, no more disabilities, and no more death (Rev. 21:4). This changes everything about how we are to live purposeful lives here and now.

Exercise is deemed valuable, but not as valuable as training the soul and living for others (1 Tim. 4:8). Why not use these temporarily healthy bodies to serve God more vigorously in the church rather than for vainglory on social media? If we get diagnosed with a terminal illness, we can face death with the hope of life. In that moment, how might we fight for faith in the resurrection and glorify God even in our suffering? If we will receive a new body clothed in immortality, then we are willing to make sacrifices for the kingdom in this temporary body the Lord has given us. Missionaries do this all the time when they live in unsanitary or physically dangerous places for God’s worship among the nations. In some areas of the world, that may mean having this earthly body destroyed for Jesus’s sake. The end-time resurrection of our bodies changes the value we place even on our physical bodies if there are higher goals to glorify God in this life.

Beatific Vision

In the end, we shall see God. On the last day, in our resurrected bodies and souls, we shall see the one whom we love. We shall be brought face to face with him, gazing upon his beauty without hindrance and without end:

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- **Psalm 17:15:** “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.”
- **1 Corinthians 13:12:** “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”
- **1 John 3:2-3:** “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”
- **Revelation 22:4-5:** “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

These are only a few scriptures describing this blessed vision of God. This future vision impacts today by destroying any rivals to this supreme desire of our soul. We can then pray, “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you” (Ps. 73:25).

Hope of this “happy” vision helps us endure the suffering here and now. We can lose everything, but to gain this one thing in the end is worth it. The loss of friends, jobs, health, possessions, and status is nothing in comparison to whose we are, who we shall see, and who we shall be. His presence, above all else, is the one thing needful and the end for which we were made. Our God, whom we love, is and will be our heaven.

We have joy here in contemplation by faith, but abounding joy later. Like the longing of a husband returning from deployment to see his wife and kids, so the saints will have this longing fulfilled on the last day. In the words of Augustine:

Enter into joy without sorrow, which contains all pleasure, where every good will be and not any evil. Where life will be vital, sweet and loveable, and always memorial (memory held dearly); where there will be no assaulting enemy, nor any snares, but supreme and certain security, secure tranquility and tranquil pleasure and pleasurable happiness; a happy eternity, eternal blessedness and the blessed vision of God, which is the joy of the Lord thy God. O

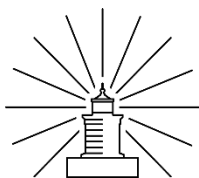
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joy above joy! Joy overcoming all joy; joy besides which there is no joy ... When shall I enter into thee, that I may see my God, who dwells in thee?

A life looking to this final vision by faith shall never be the same. No position so low or place so high; no worldly goods so great or means so little; no experience so full or dream so large, can compare with the fullness of what is to come in beholding God face to face. Then, only then, will the end, the endless end, be reached. For now, we walk by faith and not by sight.

Reflection Questions:

1. What other end-time realities shape how we live in the present? Can you think of others?
2. How does the beatific vision impact our lives here and now?
3. In what way have you lived for this present world instead of the future?
4. What are the current challenges in your life to live for these eternal realities?



CONCLUSION

I hope this short study has helped you see the purposeful life as a God-centered life. Knowing God's story of the world from Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation helps us find our place and purpose in it. We were created for God, fell from God, redeemed by God, and will be complete in God, all to the honor and praise of God. The specific details of our individual lives serve this greater and more glorious end. Anything less would be both sinful and unfulfilling. So, the question for you today: Have you found the way?



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