



40 Days of Purpose

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Week 2 – Worship: You Were Planned For God’s Pleasure

Notes: This Bible Study is taken from the 40 Days of Purpose Weekly Lessons guide available from www.purposedriven.com. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Welcome back to our study of the *Purpose Driven Life*. In our last session we began this series by asking the question, “What on earth am I here for?” and we looked at some of the benefits of knowing God’s five purposes for creating you and living a purpose driven life. We talked about how purpose focuses your life, simplifies your life, and gives your life more significance and motivation. Life is a lot more fulfilling when you know what you were put here for.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Our Primary Purpose: God’s Pleasure

In this session we’re going to look at the first of God’s five purposes for creating you: You were planned for God’s pleasure. This is the first purpose of your life. We were made by God and for God, and until we understand that, life will never make sense... “*All things were created through Him and for Him*” (Colossians 1:16).

What are the implications of being created for God? How should the knowledge of this truth change our perspective?

It all starts with God, not you. You were put on this planet so God could love you and enjoy you, and so you could love and enjoy God back. As amazing as it seems, you were created for a relationship with God—not a religion, but a relationship. God knows everything about you and loves you, and He wants you to get to know Him and love him back.

B. Worship: a Misused Word

The Bible uses a particular word for this first purpose. Unfortunately, this word has been so misused and abused it has lost its original true meaning. What word am I talking about?

The word is “worship.”

When I say the word worship, what ideas come to mind?

Depending on your religious background, you may think of church services with singing, praying, and listening to a

sermon. Or you may think of ceremonies, candles, and communion. For many people, their understanding of worship is limited to just what happens on Sunday morning.

Jesus defined worship very differently...

One day a man asked Jesus, “What is the greatest commandment in the Bible?” Jesus responded by saying, “The greatest commandment is this: ‘Love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ The second greatest commandment is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (*Matthew 22:35-39*)

What did Jesus say is the first and primary purpose of your life?

Jesus said that learning to love God with your entire being is the first and primary purpose of your life. This is what real worship is all about. Worship is about loving God. It is about living a life that brings pleasure to God.

What value then are the activities that people usually associate with worship... going to church, music, singing, listening to sermons, etc.?

All the other things are some of the tools of worship, but real worship is what happens in your heart. It is expressing your love to God and living your life to please Him. In a nutshell, worship is far more than going to church; worship is a lifestyle of loving God.

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

Let’s take a look at Romans Chapter 12... Paul devoted the first 11 chapters of Romans to explain all the wonderful things God has done for us. He explained our salvation, forgiveness, and security in Christ. Then, as he begins chapter 12, he turns a corner and tells us how we should respond to God’s grace and love.

Knowing all that God has done for us by creating us, sending Jesus to die for us, and preparing an eternal home for us in heaven, how should each of us respond? What do the first few words in Romans 12 give us as an answer to this?

“Therefore I urge you brothers...”

Anytime you see a “*Therefore*” in the Bible, you should first find out what it is “there for.” In this case, Paul is saying that in light of all the many ways God has shown his grace

and goodness to you—essentially, all Paul has just described in the preceding 11 chapters—here’s what you should do:

“...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)

These verses explain exactly what it means to live a life of worshiping God, which is God’s first purpose for creating you and putting you on this planet.

A. You must DEDICATE yourself to God.

What does Romans 12: 1 say about what we should do to live a life of worship that is pleasing to God?

Romans 12:1 - *"Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and PLEASING to God which is your spiritual worship."*

The first step in living a life of worship that pleases God is to offer, dedicate, and commit your total life to God. **You must DEDICATE yourself to God.**

What does it mean to dedicate yourself to God?

This means being willing to do with your life whatever God asks you to do—even before you know what it is. Offering your life to God is the first part of worship.

In the weeks ahead, we’ll discover God’s other purposes for your life. But you can’t do any of the other purposes without starting with this one: giving yourself completely to God and telling Him, “God, I want to live for Your purposes, not my own. I want to fulfill Your plan for my life, not my own.”

God made us to worship Him. If we don’t worship Him, what are we doing?

If you don’t put God at the center of your life, you’ll put something else there that doesn’t really deserve to be there: a possession, a relationship, money, or even yourself. This is the number one source of stress: worshiping anything else more than God.

Romans 12:1 also shows us three characteristics of the kind of life that makes God smile...

1. Worship is VOLUNTARY dedication of your life to God.

What is meant by, “offer your bodies?”

Offer means to voluntarily give. Of course, God has a right to demand that you live for Him since you wouldn’t even be

alive if He hadn’t decided to create you. Instead, because God wants you to love Him voluntarily, He has given you the choice. **Worship is VOLUNTARY dedication of your life to God.**

How does our voluntary dedication to God conflict with what the world think of “religious” people?

Sometimes unbelievers look at Christians and think we worship and live for God out of fear, duty, or pressure. That’s not the case at all. Real worship is voluntary. We live for God not out of obligation, but out of gratitude.

What does it reveal about us if we don’t feel like worshiping God or living for His pleasure?

This reveals one thing: you don’t understand how much God loves you. If you really understood how much God has done for you, you’d want to immediately offer the rest of your life to living for God and His purposes, not your plans and dreams. God is a loving Father, not a cruel taskmaster...

Matthew 11:30 - "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

2. Worship is a practical dedication of your life to God.

Consider, "Offer your bodies" again...

Why would God want your body?

God wants your body because without it you can’t do much on this planet. Right now God has put you in an earthly body. Fortunately, we’re not going to have these bodies forever; you’ll get a new one in eternity. But while you’re here on earth God says, "Give me what you've got."

Why doesn’t God say, “offer your soul” or “offer your spirit”?

Because when you give your body it means you’re getting practical. Have you ever heard anyone say, "I can't make it to the meeting tonight, but I'll be with you in spirit"? Do you know what that means? Nothing. Your spirit isn’t there. As long as you are alive, your spirit is wherever your body is. And if your body isn’t there, neither are you. **So worship is a practical dedication of your life to God.**

What does 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 have to say about what we are doing with our bodies when we serve God?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (LB) - *"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."*

Whenever you use your body for God’s purposes, you are worshipping, whether you are in a worship service or not.

3. Worship is a COMPLETE dedication of your life to God.

What is meant by , "Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice?"

God sacrificed Himself for you by sending his Son Jesus to die for you. Because He sacrificed His life, you will now be able to live forever with God in eternity. In exchange, God wants you to give your life to Him. He only asks you to do what He has already done for you. Sacrifice means complete dedication to God. **So worship is a COMPLETE dedication of your life to God.**

What is the problem with a living sacrifice?

A living sacrifice can crawl off the altar. A lot of us do that. We come to church and sing, "Onward Christian soldiers" and then go AWOL on Monday. You see, worship is moment-by-moment dedication. It is lifelong.

The Bible says that when I offer my life to God—voluntarily, practically, and completely—and when I dedicate myself to fulfilling the purposes for which He created me, the result is that my life is "*holy and pleasing to God*" and it is also "*your spiritual act of worship*."

In many churches, "worship" is just a synonym for "music." We say, "First we had the worship, and then we heard the teaching (or sermon)." Worship is far more than just music. Worship is not just something you do at church. Worship is what happens any time you live to bring pleasure to God.

The first part of living a life of worship is the principle of dedication: offering yourself totally to God.

B. You must learn the principle of INSOLATION.

The first part of Romans 12:2 (NIV) says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world...." What does Paul mean by this?

This is a reference to the world's value system. He's saying, "If you want to live a life that brings Me pleasure—a true life of worship—you can't get caught up in the self-centered, selfish, materialistic, 'me first' mentality you find among non-believers. Don't be pressured into the world's philosophy. Be different."

A Peanuts cartoon from a few years ago summarized it like this: "I can resist any pressure except peer pressure."

How is our command not to conform to the world contrary to what people generally practice?

Most people make their decisions based on what is accepted by others. They build their lives around public opinion, not on God's will. If you are serious about living a life of worship, you can't worry about what other people think.

Why is there so much pressure to conform to the world?

You can sum it up in a single phrase: "Everybody's doing it." People want to be accepted by others so they tend to do what others do.

How can you live in the world without being infected by it?

The answer is neither isolation nor imitation. The answer is insulation with an "o" not a "u." I'll get to the meaning of insulation with an "o" in a minute. You'll see that there's a big difference between these two.

What do Christians who insulate themselves from the world do?

They say, "I don't want to have anything to do with the world. I won't go to the movies, watch television, read newspapers, or shop in certain stores. I will stay as far away from unbelievers as possible. Some even go to live in monasteries. Most just create their own little version of Christian culture.

What is the problem with insulation with a "u"?

Jesus told us to share the Good News with unbelievers and He modeled hanging out with non-Christians so much that the religious people called him "the friend of sinners." If you want to be like Jesus, you need be friends with sinners, too. So isolation is not the answer.

What is the other extreme from being insulated from the culture?

Christians who go to the other extreme become just like the world. They imitate everything they see in the world's culture. Whatever the world does, they do it, too. They want to fit in.

What is the problem with becoming just like the world?

Christians who become just like the world lose their distinctiveness and so their witness will be less effective.

Since the Bible clearly tells us that the solution is neither imitation nor isolation, how do we live a life pleasing to God?

The answer is insulation with an "o." The dictionary says that insulation is the **therapeutic exposure to sunlight**, in this case, Sun light again with an "o," not a "u." (This is kind of a double pun.)

For example, ever consider why ocean fish does not taste salty? If God can keep a fish in salt water its entire life without the salt permeating its body, God can keep you in a non-Christian world without your becoming infected.

Insulation is allowing God to infiltrate us with His truth which inoculates us against being infected by the world's culture. **So you must learn the principle of INSOLATION.**

Let's review. First, if you want to live a life of worship you must offer your life to God. Second, you must learn how to live in the world without letting it control you. These two verses give us one more principle for living a life of worship.

C. You must live the principle of TRANSFORMATION.

Paul says, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." What does it mean to be "transformed?"

In Greek, this word is "metamorphosis." A common illustration for the meaning of this word is the process that a caterpillar goes through in changing from an ugly bug to a beautiful butterfly. **So you must live the principle of TRANSFORMATION.**

How does worship transform us?

The more we focus on God, the more our lives are transformed from being ugly bugs to being beautiful butterflies that are free to soar.

For example: When you focus on God in worship, you see His greatness, which always shrinks your problems in comparison. The more you see God's greatness in worship, the smaller your problems become.

How do we renew our minds?

We renew our minds by setting our minds on God. When we do this, we are no longer self-focused, but God-focused...

Psalm 16:8-9 (GW) - *"I always keep the Lord in front of me. When he is by my side, I cannot be moved. That is why my heart is glad and my soul rejoices. My body rests securely."*

III. THREE REASONS WHY WE SHOULD LIVE FOR GOD'S PLEASURE

Paul closes these two classic verses on worship by giving us three reasons why we should live for God's pleasure. Notice the last phrase: "...you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His **good, pleasing, and perfect** will." Romans 12:2 (NIV)

A. Living a life of worship is THE GOOD LIFE.

What is meant by God's "good" will?

The Greek word translated here as "good" literally means, "high quality." God's plan is the good life...

Jeremiah 29:11 (TLB) - *"...I know the plans I have for you... plans for good not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

A life of worship is an exciting and stimulating life.

Living a life of worship is THE GOOD LIFE.

B. Living a life of worship is PLEASING.

What is meant by God's "pleasing" will?

This means living a life of worship is enjoyable. **So living a life of worship is PLEASING.**

Why isn't a life lived for God hard, burdensome, and strict or boring and uninteresting?

God says it is the exact opposite. Worship—being connected and in harmony with the Creator who made you—is the secret of really enjoying life. You will never be any happier than you are living a life of worship dedicated to God.

C. Living a life of worship is PERFECT.

What is meant by God's "perfect" will?

Perfect doesn't mean sinless; it means complete, whole, nothing missing. Literally, this means God's plan for your life is tailor-made. It fits perfectly like a suit that's been tailor-made because this is the first purpose for which you were created. **So living a life of worship is PERFECT.**

IV. APPLICATION

As we close this session on the first purpose of your life, I'd like to ask you some personal questions: Have completely dedicated your life to Christ? Have you offered your body to God? Have you said, "God, my first goal in life is to get to know You better, learn to love You, and fulfill the purposes You put me on earth to fulfill"? Let me be blunt. Until you come to that point in life, you're not really living; you're just existing.

Let's bow our heads and pray together:

Father, I thank you for Your Word and how clear it is. Please use the daily readings in the Purpose Driven Life book to help us all understand the full meaning of what it means to live for Your pleasure. We want to begin with these first steps.

Now please join me silently in the rest of this prayer:

Father, I want to live the life You created me to live—the life that is good, enjoyable, and complete—custom made for me. I want to learn to live a life of real worship for Your pleasure. Today, right now, I want to dedicate, or rededicate myself to You—voluntarily, practically, and completely. I give as much of myself as I understand to as much of You as I understand. And I ask You to help me live for Your pleasure, not the opinions of others. Help me to be in the world, but not of the world. I ask You to transform the way I think about life in the weeks ahead as I learn the purposes for which You created me. In Jesus' name, Amen.