

PURPOSE RESTORED

Leader pages on pp. 110-113

THE POINT:
THROUGH JESUS, WE CAN BE FORGIVEN AND RESTORED TO THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH HE CREATED US.

ACTS 3:14-26

¹⁴ You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer released to you.

¹⁵ You killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this.

¹⁶ By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Jesus has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.

¹⁷ "And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your leaders also did.

¹⁸ In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets—that his Messiah would suffer.

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MEMORY VERSE

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¹⁹ Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out,
²⁰ that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.

²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time of the restoration of all things, which God spoke about through his holy prophets from the beginning.

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²² Moses said: The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to everything he tells you.

²³ And everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be completely cut off from the people.

²⁴ "In addition, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, have also foretold these days.

²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham, And all the families of the earth will be blessed through your offspring.

²⁶ God raised up his servant and sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways."

KEYWORDS

Holy and Righteous One (v. 14)—These terms are most likely synonyms and both have messianic emphases.

Sins (v. 19)—The term (*hamartia*) means "missing the mark," in this context a departure from God's standards.

The presence of the Lord (v. 20)—*Lord* is a term usually associated with Jesus. Here it refers to God the Father as the source of seasons of refreshing.

Completely cut off (v. 23)—Those who reject Jesus are faced with the dire consequence of eternal separation from God in hell.

HOW DOES JESUS'S PURPOSE IN DEATH AFFECT OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE?

Paint doesn't last. It fades. It cracks. It peels. Live in a house long enough, and you will find yourself needing to repaint any exterior wood. I've had to do that twice over the years.

When I paint, though, I'm only dealing with one color. Wash the wall, scrape away anything that's peeling, and slap on a new coat. That process is manageable. However, dealing with hundreds of colors that have faded and been covered with years of grime is something altogether different. Art restoration is a monumental task best not left to people like me. Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, the fresco painted on a wall at the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie began to deteriorate shortly after da Vinci put his brushes away. Since its completion in 1498, the painting has undergone seven attempts at restoration, and the last one took twenty years.⁴

We need restoration too. We've lost our way, wandered from God, and painted over the abundant life and purpose for which God created with the dull color of self and the grime of sin. No DIY effort will do. We need the Master Restorer.

Guilty As Charged // Acts 3:14-18

Few people like interruptions. I don't, but I'm trying more and more to see interruptions—those unplanned phone calls or encounters—as opportunities. That's what the apostles Peter and John did. In Acts 3, these two followers of Jesus were headed to the temple to pray. Prayer is certainly an important and needed practice for all of us, but Peter and John were interrupted. They encountered a lame beggar, but instead of giving him a few coins, they gave him something better. "Peter said, 'I don't have silver or gold, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!'"

The man was immediately healed, and he was able to do something he had never done before: "he entered the temple with them." His lameness had barred him from entering. The man didn't just enter; he was "walking, leaping, and praising God." I think even today someone leaping around would draw a crowd, and a crowd was definitely what formed in the temple that day. Peter seized this interruption and turned it into an opportunity to talk about Jesus.



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Peter began with a question that had an obvious answer: "Fellow Israelites, why are you amazed at this?" Why? A disabled man who has never walked is leaping around! Yet, to Peter's point, this man was healed, not by the two apostles, but by Jesus. Giving health and healing to people was routine work for Jesus, all in a day's work. Peter was clear in giving the honor and glory to Jesus.

Peter then turned the attention away from the healed man and on to the crowd. He had brought Jesus into the conversation, but then said, "You denied the Holy and Righteous One . . . You killed the source of life." That was a serious and sobering accusation because the Greek meaning behind "denied" doesn't necessarily mean they didn't believe, but that they refused to accept the truth. Even though the people were aware of Jesus's teaching and incredible miracles, they didn't want Him. In addition, Peter wanted them to understand that they didn't just reject some itinerant rabbi; Jesus is "the Holy and Righteous One." This wasn't lost on the Jewish crowd. Peter was referring to Jesus as God's Messiah. Here was God's Messiah—the very source of life—in their midst, but they rejected Him and killed Him.

Thankfully, that wasn't the end of the story. God raised Jesus from the dead. This wasn't hearsay or wishful thinking. Peter and John stood there as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus.

Because Jesus is alive, He is still at work; He works on our behalf as we place "our faith in his name." The name of Jesus isn't some magical word; even for us, our names represent the whole of who we are, so to put faith in the name of Jesus is to believe in and trust in Jesus's authority and power. Because Jesus is alive, putting our faith in Him is still as powerful and transforming as it was for this once crippled man.

How much faith does it take? We don't know how much faith or understanding this crippled man had, but when Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!" (v. 6), it was enough for him to take hold of Peter's hand. Mustard seeds are incredibly small—1/8th of an inch in diameter, but Jesus said, "For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you," (Matt. 17:20) and nothing is impossible! A man stood with Peter and John who could attest to that. Beyond the physical healing, Jesus healed him spiritually, and He can do the same for you.

WHERE DO YOU SEE EVIDENCE IN OUR CULTURE THAT PEOPLE NEED RESTORATION?



DIGGING DEEPER JESUS, THE ONLY WAY

Often to obtain membership to groups and organizations, certain requirements must be met. Fortunately, when we want to enter the kingdom of God, we're not confronted with a list of prerequisites; there is only one way. "Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6). Other Scriptures also speak to the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the only source of restoration back to God.

- **1 Timothy 2:5:** "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."
- **Romans 10:9:** "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."
- **Acts 4:12:** "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."

Do you actively point others to the *one true way* to a relationship with God?



Forgiveness Offered // Acts 3:19-21

Peter had led with the bad news first. The bad news was wrapped up in the healing of the crippled man, but there it was: you killed the One who is the source of life! You may have acted in ignorance (v. 17), not fully realizing the implications of denying and rejecting Jesus (vv. 13-14), but it's still bad news. You had a hand in crucifying the Son of God.

Peter now followed with good news. Their past actions were not the end of the story if they acted upon the next words Peter spoke. "Therefore repent and turn back." Change your mind about Jesus and the life apart from Him you have been living. This is more than altering and tweaking your opinion of Jesus; it's a complete 180-degree change in direction. Picture the soldiers on parade who are given the command, "About face." They turn around in the opposite direction. That was the call issued to the crowd that day, and it's the invitation we're given. Your past doesn't need to determine your future. Come to Jesus in full repentance of your past—turning fully away from your sin and turning fully to God—and see what He does!

Peter points to three things God does when we repent and turn back.

1. **Your sins are wiped out.** "Wiped out" carries the meaning of "erased." It doesn't matter how stained we are from our past failures, rebellion, and sin, Christ's death on the cross fully erases and makes us clean.

2. **Seasons of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord.** Jesus doesn't just remove the bad; He replaces it with something good! For most of us, fall is quickly approaching. Depending on where you are, you may have already begun experiencing the hints of fall. After the sweltering days of August, that first day you step outside and feel a significant change in the temperature and humidity is so refreshing. After a life of sweltering sin, the cool breeze of forgiveness is so refreshing. To walk with a restored purpose in life is a breath of fresh air.
3. **He will send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.** We can experience the forgiveness and refreshment of His presence in our lives, but that is only an inkling of what's to come when Jesus returns to set up His eternal kingdom. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away (Rev. 21:4).

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER IN PETER'S PLEA FOR REPENTANCE?

Purpose Reestablished //

Acts 3:22-26

One of the most offensive statements a Christian can make is that Jesus is the only way to God. We are viewed as arrogant and narrow-minded because we take Jesus at His word when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). That isn't just the sentiment of people on the outside looking at the church; up to 70 percent of people who claim to be Christians say there are more ways to God.⁵

Peter would certainly disagree with that erroneous viewpoint. He heard Jesus speak that claim of exclusivity with his own ears. If there's more than one way to God, why did Jesus have to die on the cross? Even Jesus Himself prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matt. 26:39). There was no other way, and Jesus went to the cross. Peter confirmed this when he said, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name

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under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

If anyone thought they had an inside track into coming to God, it would be the Jews. They were descendants of Abraham. They had Moses, and God Himself gave the law to Moses. They had God's spokespersons, the prophets. They had the covenants, the special relationships God established with His people.

Yet, that wasn't enough. Even Moses, the highly esteemed leader of the Jewish people, spoke of Another. "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him" (Deut. 18:15). The prophets also pointed to Him.

Listen to the Messiah, and do what He says. Repent and turn to God. He's the only one worth listening to. There's great news because He wants us to come to Him. He wants to save us. He wants to bless us, but it's through Him and only through Him.

WHAT OTHER PATHS DO PEOPLE ATTEMPT APART FROM CHRIST TO FIND SALVATION?

DID YOU KNOW?

Before Civil Rights Activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus, there was Claudette Colvin, a fifteen-year-old who was arrested for failure to give up her seat to a white passenger on a bus in Montgomery in 1955. Colvin was convicted of violating Montgomery's segregation ordinance and assaulting a police officer. In October 2021, Colvin sought to have her records expunged, which means erased or removed completely.⁶ In November of 2021, an order was signed for her records to be destroyed; however, this process of expungement does not equate with "forgiveness," and in the world of the internet, often accounts and records of events are never really lost. Aren't you glad we serve a Savior who will blot out our transgressions (Isa. 43:25), cast them as far as the east is to the west (Psa. 103:12), and forgive us of our sins (1 John 1:9)?

Biblical Truth: Only the blood of Jesus can wash away our sins.

Is there an offense you need to bring before the Lord so that your slate can be cleaned?

LIVE IT

What does it look like to live a restored life in Christ?

There are times that we need to be rejuvenated and restored. We may become weary and worn, and sometimes we've not followed the path that God has outlined for us. As Christians, it is important for us to recognize this state of decline and turn to our Redeemer and Restorer, Jesus Christ. He is willing and able to make you brand new and restore you to the purpose for which you were created.

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- **Repent.** Restoration begins with repentance and faith. If you've never made a commitment of your life to Christ, talk to someone in your Bible study group or church about your desire to follow Christ. The inside front cover of this book can tell you more.
- **Refresh.** Spend some focused and unhurried time with Jesus by praying and reading His word. Let His Spirit wash over you to keep you strong.
- **Restore.** Let others see Jesus in you as you live out a renewed and restored purpose. You can't restore others to their purpose in Christ, but you can be a testimony to them of how Christ restores. Be ready to tell your story to all who are willing to hear.

DAILY READINGS

1. RESTORED IN CHRIST // JEREMIAH 30:17

Through Christ, mankind's purpose has been restored. In the beginning, God blessed man to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26). And then in Gen 2:6, tend to the garden He had made for him. The charge is still the same. We are to bear the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), and multiply through compelling others to come via the love we show one another. The Holy Spirit who lives within the believer makes this charge possible to live out, to tend to the garden of heart, and dominate over all of life's challenges.

God is Jehovah El-Ashiyb, the Lord our Restorer.

2. A LIFE FOR A LIFE // ISAIAH 61:1

Isaiah 61:7, Jesus declared that He had come to "bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal[a] the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners." He was in essence saying, that He had come to restore mankind back to the Father, their Creator. He was the long-awaited Messiah to save mankind from their sins. The price of our freedom cost God His Son. Living in devoted pursuit of His purpose for our lives is a show of our gratitude. The same way Christ gave His live for us, we in turn must give our life away in surrender to Him.

God deemed mankind, His beloved creation, worth the price of restoration.

3. ACCESS GRANTED // JOB 42:10

Forgiveness is restorative. Job 42:10 mentions, that after Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his own fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. The same happened to Jesus, God's Son, after Jesus had prayed for His friends (mankind) in that He was exalted and placed at the right hand of the Father. Jesus, however, was not only restored back to His royal position but He

invited us to partake of His restoration through accepting Him as our Lord and Savior. When we accept Him, He fills us with His Holy Spirit and becomes one with us (Rom. 6:5-7). We receive what we have been given access to through forgiveness as we by faith walk out our purpose, Romans 5:2.

Forgiveness brings restoration with and access to the Father.

4. NO PAIN, NO GAIN // 1 PETER 5:10

Suffering, though unwanted, is a necessity for growth. A good example to explain this truth is the process of muscle hypertrophy. Muscle hypertrophy occurs when the fibers of the muscles sustain damage or injury due to a person continually challenging the muscles to deal with greater levels of resistance and weight. The body repairs damaged muscle fibers by fusing them, which increases the mass and size of the muscles. In the same manner, it is only after we have suffered through the pain of life's circumstances that we increase the mass, strength, maturity, and spiritual muscle to sustain the weight of God's glory upon our lives. There must always be a cross before the crown.

Fulfilled purpose is a process experienced not devoid of pain.

5. GOD CAN RESTORE // JOEL 2:25

David asks of God in Psalm 90:12 to "Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts." Our purpose is tied to the "number of days" we have all been assigned. What we spend our time doing is, therefore, invaluable. Time is a commodity that once spent, it can never be reacquired. The enemy loves to get us focused on things that waste our time. Though we sometimes fall into these traps, God can redeem the time. He desires to restore us from the things that tried to steal our time and abort our purpose. We only need but repent and ask.

Well-managed time leads to well-fulfilled purpose in the life of a believer.



Purpose Defined!

BY MARK CROSTON

We had made it to our first day of high school. Full of excitement my friends, I sat in a packed auditorium for the beginning of our high school freshman orientation. The principal took the stage and a hush fell on the waiting crowd. He said a lot of things that day, but now, forty years later, there is only one thing I remember. He said that day, “Look to your right and look to your left. Only one of you is going to graduate from this high school four years from now.” This news was sudden and shocking. Immediately, instinctively, I turned to my friend on my right and then to the one on my left and said, “I am so sorry to hear this about you.” I said this half-jokingly, but also half-seriously. Deep inside I knew I had come to high school that day with a purpose, and that purpose required my graduation.

Purpose: why you do something or why something exists. A goal answers the what question, but your purpose answers the why question. My goal, my what, that day was high

school graduation. My purpose, my why, was actually still elusive. If you had asked me on that day, I would have said my purpose was to become a computer engineer. From eighth grade through college that is all I wanted to be. I saw my future as working with a big engineering company, making good money, and enjoying life.

In my youth group during my middle school years, I can remember memorizing the Gospel evangelism tract, *The Four Spiritual Laws*. Law One says: God loves you and offers a wonderful plan (or purpose) for your life. Truthfully, even though I had memorized this and shared it with many seeking their salvation, at that time I did not know God’s purpose from my own life. I knew some goals: high school, college, career, marriage, holiness, etc. I had a great list of “whats” for my life, but the purpose, “whys”, had not been fully revealed to me. Sure, I knew God’s general purposes for humanity, but not God’s specific purposes for me.

In his classic work, *In Pursuit of Purpose*, Myles Monroe reminds us not to ask the created thing its purpose. He says, Purpose, therefore, is the original intent in the mind of the creator that motivated him to create a particular item. It is the why that explains the reason for existence.

Over the years as I followed the milestone goals and sought to walk closer to God with each step, God slowly revealed His specific purpose for my life. Reading and studying the Bible helps us to know God's general purpose for humankind, but walking with God allows God to open up to us his specific purpose for our lives. Learning your purpose guides your life, work, decisions, and relationships. It helps us in choosing This over That.

God's unfolding specific purpose for my life moved me during my junior year of college to accept my call to be a preacher. Since I still had a passion to be a computer engineer, I just believed I would be an associate minister at the church where I grew up. I went on to my dream job at the IBM corporation, but after several years God led me to leave there and go to seminary. God led me from seminary to pastor a church in Suffolk, Virginia; and then after 26 years, to my current work at Lifeway Christian Resources.

Looking back, I can see clearly what I could not see looking forward. Understanding I had a purpose helped keep me from drugs, debt, divorce and so much more. We are who we are and where we are by incident, not accident. God made us and placed us because there is something in His divine plan, He wants to accomplish through us. God's specific purpose for me required dramatic changes, but that's for me. Your life might already be in alignment with His specific purpose, or it might take only tweaks of change. Here's what we know, "The LORD has prepared everything for his purpose—even the wicked for the day of disaster" (Prov. 16:4).

Rick Warren suggests, *God's 5 Purposes for Your Life*, that will help any of us walk in alignment with God's general purpose?

- God wants me to center my life around him!
- God wants me to learn to love his family!
- God wants me to cultivate spiritual maturity!
- God wants me to contribute something back!
- God wants me to tell others about his love!

As we seek to walk in alignment with the general purpose of God, he will make his specific purposes for our lives known. "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails" (Prov. 19:21).

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