

PURPOSE EXEMPLIFIED

Leader pages on pp. 124-127

THE POINT:
GOD IS GLORIFIED WHEN WE LIVE WITH CHRIST-CENTERED PURPOSE.

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus:
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you,

⁴ always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer,

⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

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MEMORY VERSE

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⁶ I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

⁷ Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

⁸ For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

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⁹ And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment,

¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ,

¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

KEYWORDS

Partnership in the gospel (v. 5)—Paul could rejoice because of their partnership (*koinonia*) in the work of the Lord, even when the church had problems.

He who started (v. 6)—God was the Source of the good work in the lives of the Philippian believers.

Pure and blameless (v. 10)—The goal of being prepared for Christ’s return is two-fold. First believers need to be pure (*eilikrines*) and blameless (*aproskopos*).

That comes through Jesus Christ (v. 11)—the effects of salvation flow out of the atoning work of Christ.

HOW CAN WE LIVE OUR HIGHEST PURPOSE, WHICH IS TO GLORIFY GOD?

There are two types of artists:

1. Those who paint and hope someone buys it.
2. Those who are asked to paint.

No one would pay for a painting from me, not even at a garage sale. There are others, however, who have a reputation for their art. People seek them out and pay them to paint something specific.

Michelangelo was one such artist. He was commissioned in 1508 to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He saw himself as a sculptor, not a

painter. Michelangelo's reputation was such that, even though he had never painted a single fresco, others were confident he could do it. Five hundred years later, we are still in awe of what he painted.

We have a commission too, and it's related to a work of art. We are to put on display the beautiful work of Christ in our lives. God took our sin-filled lives and made us His masterpiece. The commission we've received is to tell others what God has done in our lives and invite them to experience the same transformation. We bring glory to Him when we live out this purpose.

Thank God for All He has Done

// **Philippians 1:1-5**

Paul began his letter to the Philippian Christians with expressions of thanksgiving, joy, and affection. Joy runs throughout the book of Philippians, and it's a trait that goes deeper than happiness. Our happiness is typically based on external things; it's tied to our circumstances. Joy remains with us regardless of what we have or are experiencing. We can be having a bad day but still have joy.

Paul exemplified a life of joy. He rejoiced in Christ despite hardship (Rom. 5:3-5); and he lived to serve others before thinking about himself (Phil. 2:3-4). Paul was all about Jesus, and his mind was filled with concern for others. At the core of Paul's joy was a deep love for the Savior that spilled out into love for people. Christian joy is Christ-centered and others-oriented.

Joy also infused Paul's prayers. He openly confessed that he gave "thanks to my God for every remembrance of you." He was filled with joy over what God had done for the Philippians. Even though the church wasn't perfect, Paul was still grateful for the believers there in Philippi—all of them! Paul could see evidence of God's grace in others and praised God for His work in them.



THE POINT: GOD IS GLORIFIED WHEN WE LIVE WITH CHRIST-CENTERED PURPOSE.

HOW DOES REMEMBERING GOD'S PAST ACTION MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR LIVES TODAY?

Paul surely had many reasons to be thankful and to pray with joy. After all, toward the end of this letter, he said, "Rejoice in the LORD always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4). Paul wouldn't call them to do something he himself wasn't doing (1 Cor. 11:1). In Verse 5, though, Paul gave a specific reason for his joy-filled prayer, "because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." Paul expressed gratitude for the believers in Philippi whom he considered his partners in the gospel. This church had supported Paul and served as his co-workers in the mission from the beginning of his time in Philippi.

God's purpose for these Philippians believers was on display. They had come to faith in Christ, and they had been serving Christ by living out the purpose to which He called them: serving others and partnering with Paul in seeing that others knew of Christ and the good news—the gospel—found in Him.

There are a lot of purposes we could assign to ourselves, and many of them can be good and noble. Even secular philosophers and writers tie one's purpose in life to making others happy or making the world a better place. Do you want to make someone happy, I mean, really happy? Eternally happy and joyous? Bring them to Jesus. Do you want to make this world a better place? Work for eternity. Be a partner in sharing and living out the gospel of Christ. This is the investment God calls us to, and it's one we will never regret.

Let's join Paul in praying with joy over what God has done. Be thankful for how Christ has saved you, redeemed you, and given you purpose. Live out that purpose so that others can be saved, redeemed, and given a new purpose in Christ.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO FOSTER AN ATMOSPHERE OF GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S WORK IN OUR LIVES?

Praise God for All He is Doing //

Philippians 1:6-8

In Verse 6, Paul gave another reason for his gratitude to God: confidence in God's nature and purposes. He was sure that God would continue and complete the work He had started in the Philippian believers! He based this upon his knowledge of God, God's saving grace, and his awareness of the Philippians' faith. God always will finish what He starts in the lives of His people. What a promise for us to hold onto! We may leave tasks unfinished, but God finishes what He starts. God started this work in us.



DIGGING DEEPER SHABACH

In 1995, Walt Whitman and The Soul Children of Chicago released a song entitled, "Shabach." that introduced worshipers to several Hebrew words for praise. Shabach means to give a loud declaration or praise to the Lord. Other forms of praise included in the song were yadah (worship with extended hands), towdah (lifted hands), tarquah (clap); tehilah (sing), halal (celebrate), and kara (dance). While this song allowed us to embrace different forms of worship, we also find these forms of worship in Scripture. In 2 Samuel 6:14, David was dancing with all his might . . ." Psalm 134:2, says to "Lift up your hands in the holy place and bless the LORD!" Psalm 47:1, says, "Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with a jubilant cry;" and Psalm 9:2, says "I will rejoice and boast about you; I will sing about your name, Most High."

How can you glorify God through your praise to Him each day?



God then continues this work in us. God will complete this work in us “until the day of Christ Jesus.”

In Verses 7-8, we see the great emotion and warmth Paul had for the church. Paul was neither an isolated saint nor an ivory tower intellectual. Paul loved people deeply. Some “mature” Christians may think they’ve grown beyond such displays of emotion but not Paul. His ever-deepening love for Christ spilled over in an ever-deepening love for the people God had brought into his life. In fact, Paul exclaimed, “God is my witness,” because he truly felt deep emotion and affection for the saints in Philippi. That’s not a claim one makes lightly!

It’s important that we learn the theology and disciplines God revealed through his servant Paul, but it’s equally important that we see how the great truths he taught were evident in his life. Paul had deep affection for God and others. His faith didn’t have the appearance of a stuffy classroom or an empty ritual; he obviously felt and demonstrated passion in what he believed and taught. That’s why Paul said in Verse 7 that he held the Philippians in his heart. A heart relationship existed between Paul and these believers.

In Philippians 2:17, Paul said he had poured out his life for the Philippians. Paul and the Philippians modeled for us what it means to have Christian friendships centered on the gospel.

HOW DOES IT HELP YOU TO KNOW THAT GOD WILL COMPLETE WHAT HE HAS BEGUN IN YOUR LIFE AND IN THOSE YOU LOVE?

Paul rejoiced because the Philippians displayed their partnership in loyalty to Paul and the mission. They not only supported Paul as he shared the gospel, but they also supported him in prayer and with financial support during his imprisonment. They didn’t turn their back on Paul. They weren’t ashamed of him, even though imprisonment brought great shame at that time. The Philippians’ loyalty to Paul even while he was in prison made this relationship especially sweet.

Just as God was working in the Philippian church, He’s at work in His people right now where you are. Rejoice and give thanks to God for what He is doing; revel in Christ’s affection for you and ask God to give you a fresh affection for His people. As you see God working in the lives of others and consider how He’s at work in you, you can experience joy and respond to Him with praise.

WHEN AND HOW DID GOD START A GOOD WORK IN YOU?

Glorify God for All He Will Do // Philippians 1:9-11

Earlier, Paul expressed confidence that God would carry on His work in their lives. Now Paul pondered what God would do as He carried on that work. Paul continued to intercede for the believers, asking God to continue growing them in Christ-centered love. It’s important that love and knowledge go together. Without being grounded in love, knowledge can be cold, dry, and boring. A lot of us can talk a good talk and have the right theology, but no one wants to listen if love for those listening is absent. How sad it is to affirm sound doctrine but have no genuine affection for Christ and others.

This passage underscores the need for both affection and discernment. Love is neither cold nor blind. Love is both deeply affectionate and biblically informed. We need love, knowledge, and discernment so that we can speak the truth in love to others.

THE POINT: GOD IS GLORIFIED WHEN WE LIVE WITH CHRIST-CENTERED PURPOSE.

Why did Paul desire for them to grow in this kind of love?

- He desired for them to “be pure and blameless in the day of Christ.” Jesus is coming and we should live in light of this fact
- He desired for them to “approve the things that are superior.” The word for approve means “to put to the test, examine.”

Paul desired these things for the Philippian believers for the fame and renown of God. Paul ended with his ultimate goal, “the glory and praise of God.” We have no higher purpose in life than to glorify God. We don’t glorify God in order to do something else; the end of it all is the glory of God. Pray for God to be glorified in you, in His people, and for God to make His glory known through us to the nations. What God will do to bring glory to Himself is a great cause for joy!

WHAT ARE SOME EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES THAT ARE GLORIFYING TO GOD?

DID YOU KNOW?

In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, by C. S. Lewis defines joy as “a deep longing for God, a hungry pursuit of God’s heart that never ends and is more satisfying than any earthly happiness.”¹⁰ Ironically, as a teen, Lewis rejected Christianity, and in his 20s, he lived as an atheist. However, Lewis turned to Christianity upon becoming friends with a devout Roman Catholic and discovering that the longings he experienced in his life were “a deep spiritual hunger for God – not just for an intellectual knowledge of God, but for a relationship with Him.”¹¹ As a writer, Lewis wrote books explaining and defending Christianity. His later works included the popular children’s fantasy novel, in which Lewis shared with others the joy he found in a relationship with Christ.

Biblical Truth: Our joy is made complete in a life lived for Christ.

Does true joy in Jesus Christ come through in all areas of your life?

LIVE IT

How will you live with purpose and glorify God?

God is glorified when we live with Christ-centered purpose, embracing an attitude of “thee” and not “me.” When you begin each day, thank the Creator God when you rise. As you perform your daily task, remember that it’s not about you, but it’s about Him. In everything you do, ask yourself if it would please God. As Christians, our daily objective is to bring glory and honor to God.

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- **Cultivate a grateful heart.** Remind yourself daily of the gospel and live out of the overflow of a heart enthralled with the Savior. As you pray and thank God for all He’s done for you, let His joy fill your heart and be seen as you serve others.
- **Meditate on Scripture.** Read Philippians 1:6 this week as a reminder that God is at work even when we don’t yet see the result.
- **Collaborate with others.** Invest your time in ministry encouraging and supporting others to share the gospel.

DAILY READINGS

1. SUBMIT TO GOD // ROMANS 10:2-4; ACTS 9:1-9

Motive matters. The motives that drive a believer to do what they do for God determine success, not the actual achievement. Only what we do for the glory of God has any lasting value. The Apostle Paul became vividly aware of this upon being knocked off his “high horse” while on a mission to persecute Christians. Paul had to be blinded to the false, self-righteous version of himself so that he could see spiritually, with unveiled clarity. He needed to see who God was and the purpose ordained for his life. Paul exemplifies how it takes submission to the invading light of the truth to discover our true purpose.

Purpose is exemplified through submission to the truth of God’s word.

2. TRUST HIS WORD // EXODUS 3:11-12

Moses, though initially insecure and reluctant, did what God directed him to do in leading the nation of Israel out of Egypt. God’s directive to lead Israel out of Egypt did not come without question by Moses. Moses questioned his ability to do so and if he was even hearing from God accurately. God assured Moses that He would be with him and after he had done His Will, He would confirm His directive through Moses coming again to worship on Mount Horeb. The significance of the sign of confirmation that God promised Moses is that he would not receive it until after he had obeyed. The lesson in this is that without faith it is impossible to please God. We must trust him at His Word as He guides us through living out our purpose.

A purpose-driven life is a faith-driven life.

3. OBEDIENCE EXEMPLIFIED // ESTHER 4:14

Esther’s initial intent in becoming the Queen, wife of King Xerxes, was not to save the nation of Israel. Her physical beauty initially led her to her position of favor and prominence, but God had another plan in mind for her. Upon realizing God’s purpose for her life, Esther resolved in her heart that, though unexpected, she would do God’s will over her own.

She resolved in heart that to not accept God, the everlasting King’s invitation, was more daring than approaching the king without invitation. Esther’s determination not only saved her, but the entire nation of Israel. Esther exemplifies the ripple effect obedience has on all of humanity, not just one individual.

A fulfilled purpose by one equates to blessings upon many.

4. A TIME AND SEASON // 1 SAMUEL 24:1-6; ECCLESIASTES 3:1

When Saul, who was King at the time, became aware that God had chosen David in his stead, Saul attempted to murder David every opportunity he had. David, however, purposed in his heart to not harm the king. Even when David had the opportunity to kill Saul privately, David refused. David was able to resist the temptation to retaliate against Saul because he understood that faith is not only trusting God’s Word but, in His timing, too. David trusted that he would publicly be crowned king one day and trusted God’s timing for that to be realized. For all things under the sun, there is a time and a season to which we must surrender.

Purpose is exemplified in God’s perfect plan and timing.

5. YOUR WILL BE DONE // MATTHEW 26:39

Jesus is our greatest example of purpose exemplified. Although Christ struggled in His humanity to surrender to God’s will, in His divinity, He willingly submitted. When Jesus prayed to God to remove the bitter cup, He suffixed that prayer with “Yet not as I will, but as you will.” God never promised that living out our promise would be easy, but He did promise to never leave us nor forsake us. He promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the age (Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20). Living out our purpose will come with challenges but be encouraged, Christ is with us and has overcome them all.

Purpose is exemplified through humble sacrifice.



Building God-Glorifying Relationships

BY JOY NETTLES

After my husband and I were married, we prayed to God for a child, and a little while later, we were blessed with the birth of our son. Because he was the only child, he received all of our time and attention, and because we were new at parenting, we wanted him to have nothing but the best. No expense was spared. He had to have the best food, clothes, and toys; he had to have the most qualified sitters; he had to go to the best daycare. Even a massage was required after his nightly bath. He was our little prince, and he knew it. Two years later, his sister was born, and though he stayed our little prince, he had to share us with a little princess.

He wasn't too thrilled about the idea, and that presented its own opportunities.

With each child, we had to work as parents to ensure that each was seen and loved as equally as possible. To accomplish this, we had to be intentional. Our words and actions had to demonstrate to both children, they were treasured. It is no different with our Heavenly Father, who never plays favorites (Rom. 2:11). According to Romans 8:14-17, if we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, then we are all heirs and brothers and sisters in Christ. No is one better than the other, all sinners saved by His amazing grace.

So, then the question becomes, what's the real issue? The true issue may reside in **our** perception instead of God's reality. How we see ourselves, family, friends, and other relationships, can be positive or negative depending upon how we look at them. Unfortunately, the negative point of view too often wins. A negative outlook can typically land in two dangerous places—favoritism and comparison. If not properly dealt with, these two entities can hinder if not destroy relationships, especially within families.

Favoritism

Genesis 37-45 presents Joseph and his brothers as an example of favoritism landing in a dangerous place. Jacob's sons knew their father loved Joseph more than them. We see the result of unchecked animosity when Joseph's brothers devised a plot to kill him. Imagine how Joseph's brothers must have felt knowing that they were second in their father's eyes. This was not just something they thought in their heads but experienced. As it did then, that hurt can easily turn to feelings of betrayal if left unchecked. We know we can't let those feelings fester. Hebrews 12:14-15 reminds us, "Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness—without it no one will see the Lord. Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and defiling many."

Comparison

Consider the example of Cain and Abel found in Genesis 4. Cain murdered his brother in anger because God found Abel's offering acceptable but held his without regard. Cain's issue was an internal one between him and God. "The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent" (Gen. 4:4b-5). However, because he compared the response Abel received to his own, he felt he had been wronged and, took matters into his own hands. Cain did not consider his own actions, only everyone else's. Cain destroyed what should have been a beautiful brotherhood and friendship. Because of unchecked offense turned hatred, he took the life of his brother.

In the age of social media, it's easy to compare our lives and our circumstances to others. There will always be something to find and someone who seems more blessed. These are the very perceptions that often lead to offense, bitterness, and sometimes even hatred towards not only others but God as well.

But we can heal and have healthy, God-glorifying relationships, when we look to Him and not everyone else. James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." When we choose to give our hurts over to Him, we're choosing to set His love higher than any hurt, offense or inadequacy we could ever feel or perceive. Imagine presenting every hurtful offense before God, and in return, He removes the hurt and replaces it with His love—a divine exchange! In every season, in every circumstance, God is faithful to His Word. When we choose to exalt Christ in our hearts, the Lord can then increase and overflow that love for others (1 Thess. 3:12).

Godly relationships are formed when God is the foundation not societal norms. Only God can show us how to be kind, loving and patient with people. Only He can heal the hurt that toxic relationships bring and reconcile one person to another. Our relationship with God has a direct impact on our relationship with other people. Our identity and worth are found in Him. Our validation is found in Him. When we believe what God says about us is true, we live by a different set of values and are better equipped to build and maintain relationships with others.

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