

Over the past four years traveling with this team, God has done some major reconstructive work on my soul. Through the ministry of the Word, my community of believers, and various authors of helpful books, God has changed my purpose of life from being flippant to being intentionally gospel centered.

Have you ever taken the time to step back and ask if you are living your life with purpose, or if you are walking worthy of the gospel?

If you don't mind humoring me, take out a piece of paper, or open up a blank document on your computer.

- 1. List out your hobbies, your enjoyments, the things that get your money and your time.*
- 2. Write out what you want to accomplish in life. In other words, what would success look like to you if you could write it out.*

The Christian life is not a war of God verses freedoms of life. These diversions and pleasures that you wrote down are **good** things from the **good** hand of a **good** God. God wants us to enjoy life, but he wants us to enjoy it as we daily fear and honor Him. We can live freely with purpose because of the gospel.

For now, put that list aside, we will come back to it.

# GOSPEL

The gospel. The good news about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The gospel is obviously for the **unsaved** (Romans 3:10, 21-24), but it is also the lifeblood for the **believer**. According to 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, we stand in the gospel. Galatians 5 and Romans 7:14-25 describes a spiritual war for the believer that goes on between the flesh and spirit that we must persevere through. Ephesians 4 and 5 commands believers to walk worthy of the calling to which they have been called. As the gospel changes a person from death to life, it causes this new creation to walk in light of the gospel's power.

# RESPONSE

The gospel demands a response.

Let's take a look at **Ephesians** to see how this gospel urges us to radically respond.

We need to remember **who we were** before we had Christ abiding in us. Ephesians 2:1-3 says it beautifully. We were dead in our sins. We walked according to the course of this world and did the bidding of Satan. In my mind I picture a path in an endless desert lined with sickly, dirty people, with shackles on their ankles and wrists, slowly walking. The sun is at its peak and the people are unbearably sad and slowly dying. This is what we were.

**Who we are** in Christ is depicted in Ephesians 2:4-10 (another great book on this is Colossians). God, being rich in mercy, with his great love, made us (who were dead slaves to Satan) alive together with Christ. He has raised us up and made us sit in heavenly places with Christ. We have been saved not by any of our own merit, but by the precious blood of Christ. We were walking according to Satan, and God snatched us up; justifying us, adopting us, and reconciling us to himself. We have moved from the land of the dead, to the land of the living.

This act of perfect love demands a daily response. We either respond as Ephesians 4:1, 5:8, 15-16 tells us and walk worthy, giving our lives over to Christ, living with purpose; or we respond very flippantly, and live our lives worshiping pleasures and freedoms. We either live life with **purpose**, or we live life like it's **worthless**.

Look at your list of hobbies, your enjoyments, the things that get your money and your time. Do you find yourself living for these things? Is this what you worship?

# ECCLESIASTES

Let's take a look at **Ecclesiastes** to see how a life of worshiping pleasurable freedoms, leaving God out of the picture, is worthless.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-10, 14, 17-18 is a pretty depressing piece of scripture at first glance. Everything is vanity? Everything is a vapor, worthless, an enigma? Yes. What profit do we have of all of our labor under the sun? People live, people die; the sun rises, the sun goes down; the wind whirls about; the eye is not satisfied with seeing; there is nothing new under the sun.

Solomon asked God for wisdom, and he got what he asked for. Even having much wisdom gave him much grief. Chapter 2:10-11 says that whatever Solomon desired,

he kept not from himself. Can you imagine having that kind of power? Think of your top five most desired things, achievements, or successes. If you were like Solomon, you could just grab them off the shelf! But he says, "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Solomon had everything he wanted, and yet, it was unsatisfactory. It was a vapor, worthless. He was making selfish choices and not living for his true purpose.

If life is all about what we want, living for pleasure and freedom, then it gets reduced down to:

- 1. Birth**
- 2. School**
- 3. Marriage**
- 4. Kids**
- 5. Retirement**
- 6. Death**

Ecclesiastes 3:20 says, "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."

*Living for pleasure and immeasurable freedoms is not what we were made for. We were made for a deeper purpose.*

We were called to freedom in the gospel, but are not to use that freedom for an occasion to the flesh (Galatians 5). Solomon sums up his message in Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 when he says that there is nothing better than to be joyful and do good as long as we live; that we should eat and drink and take pleasure in toil, it is God's gift to man. In Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Solomon says that the conclusion of the whole matter is to fear God and keep his commandments. Knowing the message of the whole book, somehow there is a balance in enjoying the life that God has given us and fearing Him as we do it. So the Christian life is not a war of God verses freedoms of life. Diversions and pleasures are **good** things from the **good** hand of a **good** God. But remember that this God is the great judge (Ecclesiastes 11:9). Revere and fear him as you take pleasure in this life. Tim Keller gives a great quote about life purpose. He says, "*We were designed to live for God. And when we live life in light of that purpose, it is freeing because it gives us a reason for living.*" Living for God is our reason for living each day!

# APPLICATION

What does this look like for life **application**? For me, I enjoy sports, hiking, acting, media, and music. So what if I did these things in light of the gospel and fearing God as I do them?

I could **join a city soccer league for the glory of God** by investing time in the unsaved on my team. If I lived out the gospel with my words and actions before my teammates, I could create an open door for the gospel to be proclaimed. If there is a fellow believer on my team, we could be a mutual encouragement to each other as we sharpen each other and evangelize our team.

Let's take hiking as another example. Instead of taking a hike by myself in the breathtaking mountains around Salt Lake City, escaping from the anxieties and pressures of life, I could **include other people**. I could invite a fellow believer to hike with me. We could enjoy God's creation and have encouraging gospel conversations with one another. We could invite an unsaved friend from work to come with us and be evangelistic with our conversation and actions.

The same goes for the work place. The same goes for hanging out at Starbucks. Because of the gospel, I can work, play, eat, sleep, and do everything with purpose!