Week 4: I Have a New Purpose

Hook

Main Point: In Christ, we have a totally new purpose in life.

Play-Doh® was never intended to be a children’s toy. It was designed in 1933 to be a wallpaper cleaner. The product was in high demand, used to remove the soot that coal left behind in homes. But sales plummeted in the late 1940s as consumers began to use oil and gas furnaces to heat their homes instead of coal. What to do? A school teacher, and relative of the CEO, used the wallpaper cleaner to craft Christmas decorations (a substitute for clay). The children so enjoyed playing with the cleaner that the company removed the detergent, added color and an almond scent, quadrupled the price, and rebranded the cleaner as a toy. Thus, Play-Doh was born.

Teacher, break your Bible Fellowship into small groups and provide each group with a product from your home. Challenge them to “repurpose” their item. Give the groups several moments to develop their new purposes, reconvene the Bible Fellowship and provide the groups time to share.

Q: Consider your purpose as a person. Compare your life’s purpose—now that you are a believer—with your purpose before your conversion.
Transition: Before Christ, most of us probably felt that we had a purpose worth pursuing: to make a lot of money, have a lot of fun, be successful, make a difference in the world, etc. But once we found Christ, He gave us a whole new purpose in life. Today, we will explore that purpose.
**Week 4: I Have a New Purpose**

**Book**

**Main Point:** In Christ, we have a totally new purpose in life.

**Text Summary:** In Christ, we have been given a whole new purpose. First and foremost, our purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Related to that, our purpose is to love other people the way God loves them and to share the Gospel, which is the greatest way we can love people, because the Gospel reconciles them to God, too.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 and Colossians 3:12–17 [Read]

**Talking Point 1:** In Christ, our ultimate purpose is to glorify God.

**Q:** How does the command to glorify God with our lives connect to our identity in Christ?

**Q:** How does putting on love, letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, and letting the Word of God dwell in us richly result in a life that glorifies God?

The Bible makes it clear that God created man for His glory (Isa. 43:7). This is our ultimate purpose. But what does that look like in our everyday living? Are Christians supposed to sing worship music and talk about God all day? Or is it something deeper and broader than that?

Of course, we fulfill our purpose by verbally praising God. Not just by singing worship music, but by proclaiming God’s glory each time we see a beautiful sunset or the birth of a baby or any other everyday miracle. C. S. Lewis wrote that “men spontaneously praise whatever they value.” In the same way a man who is madly in love with a woman can’t help but say to his friends, “Isn’t she just amazing?” so we can’t help but praise Him. We love to praise Him. Lewis says that to truly worship God, “We must suppose ourselves to be in perfect love with God—drunk with, drowned in, dissolved by, that delight which, far from remaining pent up within ourselves as incommunicable, hence hardly tolerable, bliss, flows out from us incessantly again in effortless and perfect expression, our joy no more separable from the praise in which it liberates and utters itself than the brightness a mirror receives is separable from the brightness it sheds.”

But the Bible describes worship and glorifying God as so much more than what we say. It’s the way we live our whole lives. It’s the way we love God and love others through our actions. Through many of the prophets, God tells the Israelites that He rejects their words of praise and worship because their lives don’t reflect His character (Isa. 29:13; Amos 5:21–24). Instead, God calls for justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24). James says true worship is caring for the poor and living lives that are holy, set apart from the world (James 1:27). True worship is living a life that brings glory to God (Rom. 12:1; Matt. 5:16), because true worshippers will love people the
way He does and live the way Jesus did. Paul writes that everything we do—in word or in deed—should bring glory to God, showing people how amazing He is (Col. 3:17).

In Deuteronomy, God told the Israelites that if they would follow His law, it would cause the nations around them to praise God. When those nations saw that the Israelites were kind to one another, there were no poor among them (Deut. 15:4), their leaders were humble servant leaders who cared for the people rather than using them for their own gain, their court system was fair to everyone, and the Lord was near and heard their prayers, they would see how amazing God is (Deut. 4:6–8). Because they were His people, if they followed His law, their lives would give glory to God. If they didn’t, their behavior would bring dishonor to Him. The same thing is true of Christians today. Because we bear the name of Christ, our behavior either brings glory or dishonor to Christ’s name.

When we do what Paul says in Colossians, our lives will bring glory to God. When we “put on” love like we put on our clothes in the morning (Col. 3:14)—when we let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts (3:15), when we submit to His authority and His rules and don’t let anything else take control, when we let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly (3:16). All these phrases imply lifestyle changes—put on love, let peace rule, let the Word dwell in you. When we fill our hearts and our minds with God’s Word, when we let it live in us every day, when we stay connected to the Vine, when we walk with the Spirit, our behavior will bring glory to God because we will be bearing the fruit of His Spirit.

Q: In what ways do some Christians in our culture bring dishonor to God’s name?

Q: What things do you need to change about your lifestyle in order to put on love, let peace rule, and let the Word dwell in you?

Q: How can you glorify God in everything you do? Your work? Your hobbies? The way you interact with your family, friends, neighbors? The way you speak or think or what you post on social media? Everything else?

Matthew 22:34–40 and Matthew 25:31–40 [Read]

Talking Point 2: Our secondary purpose, loving others, is part of how we glorify God.

Q: How are the commands to love God and love others intertwined?

Q: How does the parable of the sheep and the goats describe the lifestyle of the righteous?

When an expert in the law asked Jesus which commandment was the greatest, Jesus responded with two, because to love God and love others are intertwined. If you really love God, you will love others. John wrote that if someone says he loves God but doesn’t love his brother, he is a liar (1 John 4:19–21). If you truly love God, you will love whom He loves. On the shore of the
Sea of Galilee, when Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead, He asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?” And each time, when Peter answered yes, Jesus said, “Feed my sheep/tend my lambs” (John 21:15–19). Jesus was saying, if you love Me, you will care for My people as I care for them. If you have the Holy Spirit living in you, you will have the heart of God for other people. You will want to love them and serve them as Jesus did.

This is why the parable of the sheep and the goats links “good works” to the separation of the righteous from the wicked on judgment day. Not because our good works get us into heaven, but because the way we love other people reflects whether we truly love Jesus. Jesus defines for us what it means to love people—“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

Jesus demonstrated that to love is to serve. After He washed their feet at the Last Supper, He said, “I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (13:15). Love is a verb, an action word. Love is feeding the hungry, taking care of the sick, visiting the lonely. These acts of kindness reflect what God said was the right way to honor Him as opposed to empty ritual (Isa. 58:7). These don’t make up an exhaustive list but are examples of what it looks like to love someone with action. Already Jesus had told the disciples that doing religious stuff—even amazing stuff such as miracles and prophesying and casting out demons—would not get them into heaven, but doing “the will of my Father” (Matt. 7:21–23). “The will of My Father” is loving and caring for others. Jesus’ method of assessing faithful service to Him was the opposite of what people expected. The way to serve Jesus is to serve others.

In Luke, when Jesus shares these commandments, the lawyer asks Jesus a follow-up question—“Who is my neighbor?” Dallas Theological Seminary scholar Darrell Bock says the man asked this question to find out what the boundaries were, how far he had to go in loving others. Like many of us, he wanted to know the least he had to do to fulfill the law. In the Jewish faith, your neighbor was only your fellow Israelite, but Jesus blew that definition wide open—your neighbor is everyone. Jesus answers his question with the parable of the Good Samaritan and then asked the man which person in the story loved his neighbor. “The one who had mercy on him,” he answered. This answer may get overlooked sometimes, but Jesus is telling us what it means to do love—to show mercy to those in need. Whenever. Wherever. However. Whoever. All the time, every day, everyone. Love isn’t a good deed or a religious checklist, it’s a way of life (Mic. 6:8).

Q: Why does Jesus consider serving others to be the way we serve Him?

Q: How can you develop God’s heart for people?

Q: What do you need to do to keep your eyes open for opportunities to love others?

Acts 1:6–9 and 2 Corinthians 5:14–20 [Read]
Talking Point 3: Our secondary purpose, sharing the Gospel, is the best way to love people.

Q: How is sharing the Gospel the most loving thing we can do for someone?

Q: What does it mean to be Christ’s ambassador? His witness?

After Jesus was raised from the dead, He spent 40 days teaching the disciples about the kingdom of God. At the end of that time, just before He ascended into heaven, He gave them their mission—to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). For the rest of the book of Acts, that’s what we see the disciples doing, even following the geography Jesus specified—Jerusalem (chapters 1–7), then Judea and Samaria (8–12), and finally to the ends of the earth (13–28). In Matthew, just before He ascended, Jesus gave the disciples a very similar mission—to make disciples of all nations (28:19–20). In both of these passages, it is clear that this mission is not meant for just those few disciples but for everyone who follows Jesus in every time and place. When you become a believer, this mission becomes your purpose.

And it’s not just a mission; it’s part of our new identity in Christ. We are now His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:17–20). If you have been reconciled to God through Christ, you now have the ministry of reconciliation. Helping to reconcile the world to Christ is your ministry, your calling, your mission (5:18). Not that we accomplish the reconciliation ourselves, only God can do that. But we share the message of reconciliation (Rom. 10:14–15). As a marriage counselor can help reconcile a couple, we can be that third party who helps reconcile people to God.

Perhaps our modern associations with the word “ambassador” get in the way of Paul’s meaning here. We might think of a politician, whose role it is to keep the peace. We have permanent embassies in other countries, where the ambassador lives. But originally, an embassy wasn’t a building. It was a group of people who were sent to another country as an envoy or delegation to make peace. Isn’t that exactly what we do when we share the Gospel with those who are far from God? We act as representatives of God’s kingdom. As citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), we go to a “foreign kingdom,” bringing a message of peace and reconciliation from our king. We aren’t closed off in a holy huddle; we are sent into the world as ambassadors for Jesus. As ambassadors, we could go to literal foreign nations to preach the Gospel or we could go right down the street. Maybe even to our own living rooms. Wherever there are people who are not living in the kingdom of God, that is our mission field. We are sent to those people to share our message of peace.

Paul writes that it is the love of Christ that motivates us to share the Gospel (2 Cor. 5:14). This is how sharing the Gospel is connected to the first two points of our purpose as believers—to glorify God and to love others. Sharing the Gospel is the best way to love people, because the Gospel reconciles them to God, saves them from their sin, and rescues them from eternal punishment. What more loving thing could we do for people? The famous magician Penn Jillette—who is an atheist—once said, “If you believe that there’s a heaven and a hell and people could go to hell … and you think it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward … how much do you have to hate somebody to believe that
everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believed, beyond the shadow of a
doubt, that a truck was coming at you and you didn’t believe that truck was bearing down on
you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that.”viii

Paul is pleading with them, imploring them, please be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20). He says
he and Timothy are so passionate about their mission that people are saying they are out of
their minds (2 Cor. 5:13). They aren’t sharing out of obligation or duty but out of love and
passion. They have a sense of urgency. They are compelled to share the Gospel. Paul said his
entire life’s purpose was to share the Gospel, that nothing else mattered (Phil. 1:18; Col. 1:28–
29). Even his life didn’t matter, only the mission (Acts 20:24).

A lot of us are intimidated by the word evangelist. We don’t feel qualified to be one or we don’t
want to offend people. But all evangelist means is “someone who shares the good news.” If we
really believe the Gospel is good news, the most loving thing we could do for other people is
share it with them. All of us are called to be evangelists, to be ambassadors for Christ, to be His
witnesses. It doesn’t matter if you just became a Christian, have a Ph.D. in biblical studies, or
fall anywhere in between. A witness in court just shares what he has seen and heard. All you
have to do is share what Jesus has done for you—how He has reconciled you to God (2 Cor.
5:18), how He has made you a new creation (5:17). Our mission is to share the message. Only
the Holy Spirit is responsible for whether people accept it or not (1 Cor. 3:7).

Q: If we remember that we are sent with a message of peace, of good news, how does that
change the way we think about evangelizing?

Q: How can we share the Gospel in a natural way, one that is appealing and positive, that
shows people what good news it is? How can we stand firm on the truth and still be sensitive
and kind to those who are hostile to the message?

Q: Remember that ambassadors were sent as an envoy, with a group. How can we help one
another in our mission?

Q: What kind of help do you need to be more confident in sharing the Gospel? Do you need
help to work on your testimony? Better understand theology? Overcome fear? How can you
get that help?

Q: How would your life be different if you focused completely on the mission?
Week 4: *I Have a New Purpose*

**Took**

**Main Point:** In Christ, we have a totally new purpose in life.

Have you sidelined yourself in your Christian walk? Are you interested in “getting in the game” but don’t know where to begin serving? Do you want to share the Gospel, but don’t know how? Teacher, choose one of the following:


2. Challenge your group to find a partner to practice the 3 Circles Method of Evangelism and pray that the Lord would present an opportunity to share the Gospel today.


**CHALLENGES**

**THINK:** How does God want to use me in the mission? What particular gifts and talents do I bring to the mission of building the kingdom of God? Where is my unique mission field? What people can I reach? How can I share my story in a way that is appealing and winsome?

**PRAY:** For those who are far from God to be reconciled to Him. Make a list and pray for them every day. Pray also for those you don’t yet know who are far from God. Pray for opportunities to share the Gospel with anyone and everyone you meet.

**ACT:** Practice love. Choose one way you can share love with someone this week. It may be an act of kindness or it may be witnessing to him or her, sharing your story of what Jesus has done for you. Choose one specific way you can “feed my sheep,” provide for the “least of these,” or “be my witnesses,” and then do it this week.

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v Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owZc3Xq8obk