

On Purpose, 11

Up to the Task

Chapters 36-38; September 7, 2008

It's time to examine our fifth and final created purpose. We were created ...

1. To **believe** in something: God
2. To **belong** to something: His family
3. To **become** like something: His Son
4. To **bestow** something: our service, our ministry
5. And finally ... to **be sent** to something: the world

This final purpose is all about our "mission" (which comes from the Latin: "to send"). Once we *believe* in God and *receive* His Son, *join* His body and *commit* our gifts and talents to His Kingdom, we must approach this world as representatives of Jesus Christ!

This was the *first thing* Jesus covered when He came back:

... the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! Again he said, "Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.**" - *John 20:19-21 NLT*

Remember when Joseph and Mary lost track of Jesus when He was twelve years old? When they finally found Him in the temple ...

He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that **I must be about My Father's business?**" - *Luke 2:49 NKJ*

Twenty-one years later, dying on the cross ...

... Jesus said, "**It is finished.**" - *John 19:30 NIV*

It's like bookends to His life's mission on Earth. And what *He* was sent *down* to do, *we* are now sent *out* to do. So, what exactly was His mission (that is now *our* mission)? It's all about reconciliation, reestablishing man's relationship with God.

... [God] reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And **he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.** - *2 Corinthians 5:18-19 NIV*



God wants to reunite with mankind, and He wants *us* to tell them.

Our mission is the message of reunion. The enemy doesn't mind us doing all types of good deeds and acts of kindness toward unbelievers ... just as long as we don't take 'em to Heaven!



In the Great Commission Jesus tells those who would be faithful to His charge to "Go and make disciples." (*Mat 28:19*) He calls us to come and then sends us to go. It's not a suggestion, it's an instruction. It's a directive straight from the mouth of our King. And to ignore this commission is disobedience.

[Paul said] I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the **task** the Lord Jesus has given me – *[and what is that task?]* **the task of testifying** to the gospel of God's grace. - *Acts 20:24 NIV*



What is the "gospel of God's grace"? Well, in a nutshell, it's: Sins forgiven ... purpose for livin' ... and headin' for Heaven.

But, are you up to the task?

The idea of sharing our faith can leave even *outgoing* believers feeling intimidated and overwhelmed. "**All by myself?! On my own?! Talking about Jesus?!**" Yes! Sharing your testimony is *essential* to your mission because there are people only *you* can reach, thanks to your location, your personality, and your background.

But, I'm not gonna try to "psych you up" ... and "pep-talk" you ... and push you into pushing the Gospel onto your poor, unsuspecting friends and family and neighbors. I want to set your mind and heart at ease, so that you can share your faith naturally and joyfully, the way that Jesus did.

Believers often panic over their own ignorance: "**I wouldn't know what to say or when to say it or how to even bring it up!**"

[But John said that] Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. - *1 John 5:10 NIV*

You *already* have it in your heart! You just need to know what to do with it. We tend to exaggerate what Jesus wants us to do.

... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." - *Acts 1:8 NIV*

We are called to be His "**witnesses**". He uses a very specific, *judicial* term, with a clear definition. In a courtroom, the witness is not expected to argue the case, or prove the truth, or press for a verdict.

In fact, Jesus tells us that that's the Spirit's job:

... he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment ... - *John 16:8 NIV*



You're the witness; not the lawyer or the judge. So, *what* exactly is a witness expected to say? The witness simply reports what they've experienced. And they are called to report it in their *own* words.

And, *when* exactly is a witness supposed to testify? When they're invited to speak, and then questioned.



A witness doesn't barge into a courtroom: "I'm gonna tell you what I know about this case ... 'cause I'm the WITNESS!" A good witness: waits patiently, watches expectantly, and speaks respectfully (when given opportunity). An *out-of-order* witness will always be excused and disregarded!

Always be **prepared** [i.e. ready] to give an answer to everyone who **asks** you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness and respect** ... - *1 Peter 3:15 NIV*

Peter doesn't say to prepare a dissertation on the theological implication of atonement and propitiation! He says to be ready to give: "the reason for the hope that you have"



Remember the Gospel of grace in a "nutshell"? God forgives me even though I don't deserve it. I have found peace and purpose in my life. And I'm not afraid of dying ... in fact, I have hope.

Without Christ, guilt is toxic, life is meaningless, peace of mind is out of reach, and death is disturbing if not *terrifying*.

The reason for my hope, you ask? Well, Jesus died and rose again! *My* guilt is gone; He took it. I have peace in the *midst* of pain. *My life* has meaning. And I have *hope* beyond the grave. And you can too.

What else does Jesus call us in regard to our mission?

Then [Jesus] said to [Peter and Andrew], "Follow Me, and I will make you **fishers of men**." - *Matthew 4:19 NKJ*

The New Living Translation says: "I will show you how to fish for people!"

We're called to the *ultimate* catch and release program: Catch 'em before they fall too far; Release 'em from their guilt and shame.



And what do good fishermen spend the majority of their time doing? Waiting patiently, watching expectantly, and speaking softly. You know what I used to hear a lot, when I went fishing as a boy? "Don't make so much noise; you'll scare the fish!" That's good advice for every believer.

The more practiced I am at quietly waiting and watching, the more perceptive I become at recognizing the "nibbles". The key to *enjoying* our "task" is realizing the importance of building natural relationships and watching for natural moments.

But what if I'm asked a question I don't have an answer for? That's impossible! Because "I don't know" is a great answer! Or: "Would you like me to help you find the answer to that?" Or: "I could get you a book" (like: The Case for Christ).



Many believers try to justify their inaction: "I'm too shy, too nervous, too introverted. I'm just not wired that way." Let's go back to the courtroom again. Witnesses just aren't allowed to be too *bashful* or too *timid* to share what they know about the truth. A witness who won't speak is in contempt.

You might be thinking that you just don't have the courage. But, it's not bravery that we need. It's something else.

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear ... - 1 John 4:18 NIV



If your children are in a burning building you'll rush in to save them. Your "love" for your children "drives out" your "fear" of personal peril or risk.

- We don't lack courage, we lack love.

It's vital to understand this, because we quickly pardon ourselves for being too "shy", but *not* for being too "unloving". "*I'm not really wired to love.*" We don't need to pray for more courage, but for more compassion and concern for *His* children. All He asks is that we testify to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us, God.

If we're going to live life "on purpose" we must understand:

1. I was made for a mission

Q: What keeps you from telling others about the hope you have?

2. God wants to say something through me

Q: Who do you think He wants to say it too?

3. He called me to come, and sends me to go

Q: What steps are you going to take to prepare?