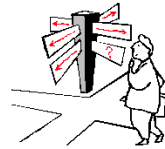




Purpose



Meaning of Purpose

“Purpose” may be defined as “the reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.”¹ Purpose involves “intention” – a thing intended; an aim or plan.²

Basis of Purpose

1. Who or what determines purpose in our lives? Why do we aim to do what we do?
2. Is there a “greater purpose” (that is, a purpose greater than ourselves) that affects our own sense of purpose in life? If so, who or what is it?

The above question is foundational to our view of purpose. Christians believe that “greater purpose” is based in God.³

God's Purpose for Humans

- ❑ God is the supreme⁴ and final purpose-giver. Since God is the Creator of the universe, including human life (*Genesis 1:1, 26-27*), he is the One who gives purpose to human life. God created humans to honor and reflect⁵ him.
- ❑ It was God's purpose to create humans with the responsibility of either honoring him or dishonoring him. Humans chose to dishonor God by rejecting his authority, resulting in a broken relationship between humans and God (*Genesis 3*).
- ❑ It was God's purpose to provide the way of reconciliation (restored relationship) through his plan of redemption, centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (*Ephesians 1:3-14*). It is God's purpose that many believe in Christ and enter into a relationship with him.
- ❑ It is God's purpose that Christian believers honor and reflect God as he originally intended (*Ephesians 4:22-24; Romans 8:28-30*).

¹ *Oxford Dictionary*. Also, ‘an intended or desired result; end; aim; goal’ (*Dictionary.com*).

² Intention requires a personal agent. By definition, non-personal determination (e.g. naturalism) cannot be the origin of purpose.

³ Some may say ‘greater purpose’ is based in family, society, culture or religion, or universal moral standards or principles. However, if God is excluded, such ‘greater purpose’ is based only in humanity and is subject to the limitations inherent in humanity (selfishness, ignorance, uncertainty, etc.). Thus the basis of purpose is unstable and transitory. Thus many people feel a lack of certainty, peace and hope. If the basis of purpose is God, that's better!

⁴ ‘supreme’ – highest in authority, power, quality and importance. Actually, God is *infinitely* greater than all He has created. He is the supreme ‘engineer’ (designer), builder, and manager.

⁵ The word ‘reflect’ helps explain the meaning of ‘created in the image of God’ (*Genesis 1:26-27*). Humans were created to represent God and reflect His character (*Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8:5-8*). Humans were created to know and love God, show love to other humans, and manage and take care of the earth (*Genesis 2:15*). Humans were created to ‘glorify God’ (*1 Cor. 10:31*) which is ‘to live in a way that makes [God] look more like the beauty and infinite worth that he really is’ (John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life* [Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003], 32).

More about God's Purposes

- ❑ God's purposes stand firm. "...the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations" (*Psalm 33:11, NIV*).
- ❑ God's purposes overrule human plans. "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails" (*Proverbs 19:21, NIV*).
- ❑ God's purposes involve suffering. But "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (*Romans 8:28, NIV*).
- ❑ God's purposes have been revealed in the Bible.⁶ "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (*2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV*).

Our Purposes

- ❑ Our daily lives are *full* of purposes, but we realize that some purposes are more important than others. We may ask questions like: What is my purpose in pursuing my degree program? What is my purpose in doing the work I do? What is my purpose in a particular relationship? How can I have a greater sense of purpose? Or even, what *is* the purpose of my life?!

3. What kinds of questions do *you* have about *your* purposes in life?



- ❑ It makes sense to consider God's purposes when we are thinking about religious or spiritual matters. For example, what is God's purpose in my church attendance or Bible study participation? But what about other matters, like education, work, relationships, etc.?
4. Are these matters related to God's purposes? Should they be? If so, in what ways can our purposes in education, work, relationships, etc. be related to God's purposes?⁷

5. In order to align all of our purposes with God's purposes, what can we do?⁸

Reflection & Application

- How do your purposes relate to God's purposes, especially "God's Purpose for Humans" (*above*)? Do you need to believe in Jesus Christ and commit yourself to God's purpose?
- Brothers and sisters, you may say, "My purpose is to honor and reflect God." But what does that mean for you? How does it affect your desires, ambitions and goals in the various matters of your life? Commit to consider each "life matter" and align your purposes with His.

⁶ This doesn't mean we know *everything* about God's purposes. But God has revealed (and continues to teach us) everything we *need* to know concerning His identity, plans and purposes for his creation. The Bible is God's primary communication to us today, so that we may know the true God (that is, to have a personal relationship with him); that we may experience his salvation and blessing; that we may know how to live according to God's purpose.

⁷ If this question is difficult to answer, keep participating in this study series! We will talk about these matters.

⁸ Firstly, to align our purposes with God's purposes, we should seek to understand his purposes as revealed in the Bible. We need to realize that God's purposes should affect every matter of our lives. In general, we should seek to know and love God with all our heart and be 'led by the Spirit.' This is a lifestyle that is lived by God's grace.