



EXPLORE GOD | Does Life Have a Purpose | Week 1 January 20, 2019

Rom 11: 32-38, Rom 12:1-8, Ecclesiastes, Jer 29:11

Opening: Over the coming months we will explore some of the deep questions of faith, inviting others to experience the hospitality and grace of community with us, while addressing those questions. This week, we ponder an ageless question, with a thousand answers depending on your perspective. Perhaps we can find a more meaningful way to think about our purpose.

Context: Our individualistic, competitive and independent culture is extremely productive. One purpose we might declare is “accomplishment” to go with productive. Likewise, we might compare our life and purpose as better than someone else to go with “competitive” or our “individuality” might cause us to think of uniqueness as purpose. Already we see how perspective (what we aim at, what we value, what’s important to us) might affect our view of purpose. *How do you look at life’s purpose? What would you say most defines your view of life’s purpose?*

Meaningless: Pastor Eric Haskins cited the flow of Ecclesiastes and the repetition of “Hevel”, the Hebrew word for meaninglessness, emptiness, temporary, fleeting, vanity. *Have you ever struggled with the transitory nature of “accomplishment”, “better than” or “uniqueness”? Talk about an example where, looking back at a successful accomplishment you worked hard on, your perspective changed after the fact and it became far less important—Hevel. Do we sometimes fool ourselves about importance? Why do you think that happens?*

Meaningful: Is there a counter to Hevel? Is there an antidote to meaninglessness? Each of our lives are comprised of many dimensions. We have jobs, families, friends, possessions, hobbies and things we just enjoy. We might also have work we do for others, relationships we are committed to and activities for the sake of others. *Think about the dimensions of your life. What dimensions give you the most sense of purpose? Which ones seem more “Hevel”? Let’s face it, some of the Hevel dimensions are a lot more fun. What motivates you to seek out the parts of life that lead to a sense of purpose?*

Yearning: We all have something within us that yearns for value and meaning in life--purpose. And we all have a perspective on how to satisfy that yearning. Jesus’ answer to value and meaning in life is laced throughout scripture. Pastor Pete Stearns brought us to Romans 12. *Read Rom 11:32-38. Preceding the exalting doxology we learn God’s plan “for all men” was to show His Mercy. How does this passage impact your perspective on purpose and meaning? Who is the teacher and who is the learner? How can this help guide our yearning—our perspective?*



Functioning as a body: Pastor Stearns used Rom 12:4-8 as a simple list of roles and attitudes defined in scripture. There are many other passages like this. *But what is missing here? Do you think this is intended to cover “life”? How do you feel about living within this list?*

Perspective: Clearly, we need a perspective that encompasses a broader life. Faulty perspective (what we aim at, what we value, what’s important to us) results in faulty purpose and meaning. which can lead to meaninglessness--Hevel. Rom 12:1-2 solves the problem. *What is Paul’s perspective in vs 1? What does “in view of God’s mercy” refer to?*

Present your Body: *What does this strange language mean? Pastor Stearns called it “completely emptying ourselves”. What can you do in time and space that is not done through your body? Jew’s worshipped with sacrifices on the alter all the time, what does Paul say about meaning and purpose of life here? What is your response to this sacrificial perspective?*

Do not be conformed.....but be transformed: We all know this passage about competing perspectives. *Can you share an example where you have conformed? How did you realize that? How did that realization change your perspective? Vs. 2 ends with “test and approve God’s will”. What purpose and perspective does this suggest?*

Practice of the Week: Be Honest about your Perspective

The scripture covered here (Rom 11:32—Rom 12:8) is a compendium of perspective. Beginning with worshipping the Almighty and Merciful God, followed by “therefore” our instructions for daily worship and then increasing detail of how to live in pursuit of God’s purpose for us—to test and approve God’s will. Read this passage daily and ask “How do you, God, want to alter my perspective?” Ask Him to show you where you are conformed and need to be transformed. Try to journal what you hear. This is life-long work, not an event. God is wise, He won’t give you more than you can handle. God is gentle, He comes to you with love.

Family Formation: Fun around “Purpose”

Ask about your kids’ “re-start”. What’s good in 2019 and what can we pray about? Introduce “purpose”. The purpose of a dishwasher is to get the dishes clean. The purpose of a car is to get Mommy and/or Daddy to work. The purpose of school is..... to teach you how to learn so you can make friends so you are OK being away from home let them answer (it should be interesting). What is the purpose of adults? (that could be really interesting). If the opportunity comes up, share your purpose with your kids.

Additional Resources: [What on Earth Am I Here For?](#) by Rick Warren

We’d love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you and your group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these scriptures and study guides in your lives.

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