**What’s Your Purpose ?**

**Prodigal Message #5**

**Memory Verse : Colossians 3:17** *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

*A young mother was attending her second week of the Prodigal ministry. She was sitting in a newcomer class I was leading, describing how she had been somewhat empowered to set some boundaries after just the first week of Prodigal. Not surprisingly, her prodigal daughter pushed back in response to the new rules by deciding to run away from home. Her siblings told the mom that the prodigal was headed to the Greyhound station to catch a bus to visit her aunt in California. The mom explained to us that upon hearing this news she immediately rushed to the station and found her daughter. She then bought her a plane ticket to California as she couldn’t bare the thought of the dangers and burden of riding a bus across the country.*

*In response, I asked her what her goal was? She seemed puzzled. I then reframed the question. “What is your Purpose in life? What would a win look like for you and your daughter?” She instantly began to weep as she related to the entire group sincerely and passionately that all she ever wanted to do was be a good mom. She wanted her daughter to like her and love her and be her best friend. I responded that if that was her purpose in life, then such a paradigm would explain her actions. That interchanged was a lesson to me of just how important having a clearly defined and understood Purpose was in helping us navigate the emotional and challenging times in our life.*

***Introduction:***

 Most of us have never thought about our Purpose in life. As a participant in Prodigal, you will be asked to think about the end of your life. At that point how do you want to be remembered? What would a “win” look like? Once you determine your purpose, you will have a rudder to guide not only your Prodigal journey, but a paradigm to guide every day decision making for the rest of your life. **Our actions are driven by our beliefs**. This ministry will suggest that a life purpose of “bringing glory to God above all else” will bring you ultimate reward and meaning. Such a purpose will aid in making prudent and wise decisions based on Biblical wisdom, which we believe is a paradigm of Truth that will reap joy now as well as eternal rewards.

*“A man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder – a waif, a nothing, a no man “*

 Thomas Carlyle

**Prodigal participants want a Plan!**

Everyone who comes to Prodigal wants a useful plan that will guide them to personal peace, family order, and their Prodigal’s return. Most plans require objective boundaries and enforced consequences. The best plans are simple plans that can be understood and followed.

 The reasons most plans fail are not the mechanics of the plan, but the inability to carry them out. The only way that a plan will be successful is if you believe in it enough to follow it. You will believe in them only if you are sure without a doubt that they are rooted in truth and sound principles that will stand up under the heaviest of pressure.

 The Truth you follow defines your Personal Mission Statement(PMS). Your PMS is then the written statement that defines your “purpose” or “mission” in life. After it is developed and refined then it should guide every decision you make. It defines why you get out of bed each day. It defines your relationships, your career choices, your calendar and your check book. It will determine your character and actions when no one is looking. It determines how you lead yourself and how you lead those around you.

Some sources quote Mike Tyson, ex professional boxer, as saying, “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face. “ Well, a well defined and ingrained PMS will allow you to shake off the cobwebs and refocus to that you can continue to live our your purpose.

**Why Do Good Plans Fail?**

We have an entire message on the “Plan” in weeks to come. It is important in this lesson to simply define what a successful plan is and how important a clearly defined purpose is in carrying out that plan successfully.

We must first define what a successful plan looks like. It is often a difficult paradigm shift for parents to understand that **the plan is for them** primarily, then only secondarily for the Prodigal. Make no mistake, we love and pray for your prodigal with you, but you cannot control how they respond to your plan. They are not here in this ministry with you. *A good plan restores order and peace to your life and* your *home, and provides an optimal recovery environment in which your prodigal stands the best chance to succeed.*

 With that perspective in mind, we again ask the question of why plans fail. The answer is clear and simple, yet hard to hear. **Plans fail because of an incorrect view of God.** Let’s revisit Tozer’s famous quote that sums up this concept quite well.

“*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us...Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason, the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. “* AW TOZER

Our faith rests solely on our sincere heartfelt belief of who God is and what He is like. **A plan based on the truth of God’s word is undermined by an incorrect view of God, who authored those same guiding truths. Plans are not followed primarily due to a lack of faith.**

 With that in mind, if we have a correct view of God with a steadfast faith then we should have a purpose for our life that is clearly defined and steadfast. If we are committed to that purpose, then our plan will be consistent with that purpose. In that paradigm, our plan is rooted in Truth. We are accordingly confident in that Truth and our plan has a high likelihood of success.

 Last week we discussed the Process The entire Prodigal curriculum is a methodical process to expose the character of God so that our view of Him would be clear and accurate so that we could trust Him. Part of your process will be to discover verses that will define God for you and give you insight into his character. Here are a few to consider in your exploration.

* Colossians 1:15-20 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have supremacy. For God was pleased to have the fullness dwell in him, and through him ot reconcile to himself all things, whether things of this earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.*
* Romans 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*
* John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosever believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life*
* Revelation 21:4 *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

**What is YOUR Purpose?**

Once you have determined your purpose, you need the discipline to let it guide you. Would those closest to you be able to confirm that you follow your PMS? Does your purpose drive everything you do? How does your calendar line up with your purpose? Are you spending your time, talent and treasure on things that align with your purpose? Where do you find the most satisfaction and reward in this life? These questions are not meant to intimidate you. It’s just that the answers to these questions will help you determine what truly guides you and if you are following your stated purpose.

 It is fairly obvious what drives people, as it simply plays out in their character and the choices they make. We can tell if people are driven by fear, revenge, resentment, entitlement, people pleasing, or the like. We can tell if they put God first.

**A Purpose Glorifying God**

 Ultimately, there are really only two over-arching choices of choosing how to live your life. **Life either revolves around you, or it revolves around God.** The following scriptures point clearly to what our purpose should be.

* Ephesians 1:11-12 (NIV) In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that **we**, who were the first to hope in Christ, **might be for the praise of His glory**
* 2 Timothy 1:9 God has saved me and called me with **a holy calling**, not according to my works, but according to **His one purpose** and grace
* Colossians 3:17 and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Even if you claim to want to have your life be marked by serving others, if that service is not motivated by bringing God glory, then that service is at its core, “self – serving”. God tells us that He is actually the one that gave us those acts of service to do in the first place. (Eph 2:10) He tells us in Hebrews 12:1 that He has a race marked out specifically for us.

 This ministry has unapologetically defined our guide book as the Bible, therefore we submit that ***our God centered purpose should be to put God firmly on the throne and to live fully for Him, trusting in Him and being obedient to His Word.***

 God tells us through His Word that by trusting in Him alone and living for Him, we will be able to lead ourselves, our families, and those we impact well. We can have joy despite out circumstances knowing God cares for us right now in our struggles. He does not want us to grow weary and lose heart. (Matt11:28, Heb 12:3) Following the one who has overcome the world will guide us through every storm of life by trusting in the Word of God HE has given us to direct our paths. (Prov 3:5,6) Such a purpose becomes an “eternal purpose” and leads to joy now and eternal rewards.

**PARENTING with a Purpose to Glorify God**

With this message’s principles in mind, it may be helpful to review how parenting with a clearly defined purpose to Glorify God might look.

Imagine for a moment if you were recently married and were wanting to start a family, when suddenly the Angel of the Lord appeared to you clearly like one of the Old Testament prophets. What if the angel said, *“* ***Your purpose is solely to bring God glory****. The Lord has heard your prayer for children, so he will grant your wish. However, you can bring him great glory by parenting well in remembering these precious gifts are not yours. They are His alone. As you have experienced trouble, so will they. Teach them my Word and model it’s teachings for them that they should lean not on their own understanding, but in all ways acknowledge me alone and I will direct their paths. Teach them that their security, trust and peace is found in me alone and all the alternatives lead to pain and death. Now peace be with you and God will see you at the judgement seat to review your performance.”*

At the end of your life, imagine then sitting before the Creator of the Universe who gave you every good gift you ever received and you must give an account of how you used those gifts.

 Finally the gift of your children comes up on the agenda and He gently unveils the truth that **your evaluation had nothing to do with the outcome of their lives.** He says, “*Your evaluation had nothing to do with the outcome of your Prodigal’s life or your child’s life. I was always the only one in charge of the outcome. I was only evaluating your love, obedience, and trust in me, by faithfully obeying my precepts while on your journey. Did you allow yourself to be trained by troubles and to be disciplined by me to grow deeper in love with me and to grow dependent on me alone? Did you ever come to realize that if everything else was stripped away****, I alone was enough****? “*

**Purpose Beyond Prodigal**

Isn’t it interesting that we don’t need a map when the end is clearly in view. We don't worry too much when the seas are calm and it is a bright sunny day and there is a gentle comforting breeze at our back. However, when the waves begin to rock you violently and you are uncertain if the boat you are in will withstand the forces hammering against the deck, you need to confidently know the way to safety.

We may have been taught strategies to put into place when the storms come. We may have the best and most up to date maps and have talked to the most experienced navigators when we set out on a sailing trip. However, if we do not have confidence and faith in those strategies, fear will overcome us and we will lose our way. Our journey may even end in disaster. We often default to our human instincts and follow what seems right to us in the moment and trust in our own abilities. We forget that we are not in control and forsake our guidebook, our “eternal instruction manual”. As humans there are certain things that we cannot control. Our prodigal situation is one of them. Prov. 14:12 sums it up well. *“There are ways that seem right to a man, but in the end they lead to death.”*

The one thing we are promised in this life is trouble. The Prodigal journey you are on is just one such trouble. Jesus tells us himself in John 16:33, “in this world you will have trouble, but take heart for I have overcome the world” He graciously gives us both the bad news of trouble and the way out of it in one verse. He tells us here that he is the antidote to all trouble and we would be wise to live for Him alone. He is our purpose.

**Your Purpose Determines Your “Witness”**

Furthermore, if your Purpose is to glorify God then you must be aware that everyone around you is watching. People will not follow fear and panic. They will follow calm confidence in the midst of the storm.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 *Blessed are those that* ***trust*** *in the Lord. They are like the trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they* ***go right on producing delicious fruit.***

If you are driven by security in money and possessions, the world will see it and you are apt to be destroyed when it is taken away. You will be unsettled and distracted when it is in jeopardy. Your mood will be determined by your bank account. If your worth and happiness is defined by your Prodigal’s worldly success, your life will wax and wane with them.

The central question is if you know God fully and trust Him enough to be obedient? Rick Warren has a great quote from his best selling book, *“The Purpose Driven Life”.* He gives this sobering and challenging statement. “*Understanding can wait, but obedience can not. God does not owe you an explanation. Partial obedience is disobedience.”*

We have emphasized in this lesson that our view of God is the most important thing about a man. The Prodigal ministry will continue to point you to His Word and His people to help you shape your view of God, which will ultimately give you the purpose God intended for you.

 If you ever come to believe with every fiber of your being that **He is good, He is the one in control, He loves and cares for us, and that HE IS ENOUGH,** then you have not missed the opportunity that your prodigal journey has provided. The lessons you will have learned will have prepared you for the rest of your life. There will be no further trials that will undo you. **You will be a solid rock in any storm.** You will be able to live according to your God given purpose and will bring Him glory now. You will have joy in the midst of any circumstance despite inherent and unavoidable sadness, and you will enjoy eternity with God forever.

*“God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him”*

 John Piper

Questions for Discussion

1. **If faced with a difficult decision today, how do you process it and decide on the best course of action? Give details.**
2. **Describe how your view of God has changed while participating in this ministry. if your view has not changed then what are the three things about God you would most want others to know about Him.**
3. **Does it frustrate you or confuse you that this message states that your Plan is primarily for you? Does reminding yourself of your purpose help clarify that statement?**
4. **Were you challenged by the theoretical charge that the Angel of the Lord had for us in regard to our parenting? Do you agree with that perspective. Expand upon your answers.**
5. **Does your purpose statement line up with your checkbook, calendar, relationships, words, and actions? Which one of those categories are most closely aligned and where is there the most room for growth? Explain your answers.**
6. **We will assume that your purpose is to glorify God. (if not then simply explain why not) if it is to glorify God then Piper states that we glorify Him the most when we are most satisfied with Him. Explain your satisfaction or lack of satisfaction with God and why ?**

**Notes**