

Our Ultimate Purpose

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[0:00] Okay, well, we're on our last lesson for this first part of this series that we're going through. We've been taking a look at, in lesson one, being oriented toward godliness.

Lesson two, what is the challenge that we face in this process of growing together in godliness?

Last week, we took a look at some of those resources, the provisions that God has made for us as we face these challenges, and really that make even possible our growth in godliness.

And this week, we want to take a look at our ultimate purpose for growing in godliness. I don't know about you, but at times, when I'm walking through a store, maybe like Lowe's, a tool store, something like that, or once in a while, we get a magazine that has all kinds of tools in it, and I see a picture of something, and I say, well, I wonder what that is.

And I'm not always familiar with all the tools that are out there. Of course, the next question that comes after that question of, I wonder what that is, is what?

Yeah, I wonder what it does. I wonder what it's for. And there's been some of those magazines in the past. I can't even remember. Was it Reminisce or some other magazine like that?

[1:27] I can't remember what the name of it was. You know what that magazine, Jim and Becky, what was the other one? Reminisce, and they had a number of them. Country. Oh, yeah, Country.

That was it. And in the magazine, they'd have pictures of these items somebody found in the barn or whatever, didn't know what it was, and they'd ask the readers, can you help me identify this?

And so following issues. Well, they didn't always do that, though. That was frustrating to me.

Sometimes that they wouldn't follow it up with saying, oh, this is what it was.

Sometimes they would, but not always. So I was still left in the dark as to what that item was and what it did. But that's the way we're made is trying to determine the purpose of things.

And so it is with us as well. Believing that we're not an accident of evolution, but instead a result of God's creative hand, we believe that there's a purpose for which God created us.

[2:33] And that's what we want to take a look at today. What is our ultimate purpose, and how does it relate to our growth and godliness? And this will finish our first four lessons on some of those basics or foundation for growing in godliness.

So let's start there. Our ultimate purpose, identified and defined. First of all, let's identify it, and I'm just going to ask you that question. What is our ultimate purpose?

To glorify God. You're part of a good Reformed church. Of course, you need to know that. But you'll be surprised at how many people, how many professing believers couldn't make that identification of what our purpose is.

They'll come up with a lot of things. But yeah, our purpose is to glorify God. And would you have some verses that could support that, on which you build that statement?

Roger? Yeah, there's one, and it's a nice short one to memorize, too. 1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

[3:47] Does anybody have any other verse? And that's my go-to verse right there. But there were a couple others. One other, Isaiah 43, 6 and 7.

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

Again, just another spot where that is mentioned. And then, of course, Psalm 19:1 through 6 doesn't specifically identify man, but it does speak of the whole of creation.

The heavens declare what? Yeah, the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day, they're pouring forth his speech.

And that's what we enjoy, you know, as we go out in mornings like this. Or we stand outside on a starry night. And the heavens are declaring the glory of God, his wonders.

[4:50] So, yeah, that is our purpose. We are here to glorify God. Well, let's move on to that next phase of our discussion this morning and define that.

So, how would you define that? What kind of words or phrases would you use if someone was to ask you, okay, well, what does that mean, to glorify God? Obey his commands.

Obey his commands. Heart obedience. Oh, heart obedience. That's good. We're going to, you've already, in those two questions or answers, have mentioned something.

We'll elaborate on a little bit more. Other ways that you would put it? To magnify him, make him look great. Yeah, to magnify him, make him look great.

Because he is great. Other thoughts? Show his weightiness in our lives.

[5:46] God is someone who carries weight. We're familiar with that. When we use that kind of phrase in describing someone who is great or important, they carry weight.

And that's who God is. So, we show forth that which is true of him. Well, in fact, that's moving on a little bit to some of those definitions.

Living according to how God designed us to live so that he is praised. Or reflecting the image of our creator God in all we do so that he is praised.

Another definition from Barnes commentary. The phrase, the glory of God is equivalent to the honor of God. And the direction is that we should so act in all things so as to honor him as our lawgiver, our creator, our redeemer, and so as to lead others by our example to praise him and to embrace his gospel.

Let me give another quote from John Piper. This is some of what John Piper is known for. The glory of God. God's glory is the beauty of his manifold perfections.

[7:01] It can refer to the light. It can refer to the bright and awesome radiance that sometimes break forth in visible manifestations. It did that at the tabernacle or at the transfiguration of Jesus Christ.

It was actually a visible manifestation of that light, his radiance. Or it can refer to the infinite moral excellence of his character. In either case, it signifies a reality of infinite greatness and worth.

It's always difficult trying to explain who God is. You're trying to explain an infinite person, God, with some finite words.

But these definitions are accomplishing some of that. Another quote from Piper. The proper understanding of everything in life begins with God.

No one will ever understand the necessity of conversion who does not know why God created us. Now we'll get back to that as well a little bit later on.

[8:04] But there's a lot in that phrase. No one will ever understand the necessity of conversion, and I put in there, and our growth in godliness, who does not know why God created us.

And that's why we're spending time on this. We think, well, this is basic. We all know this. Well, it is basic. But do we transfer this basic foundational truth into some of the decisions that we make through the week so that we are growing in godliness and turning away from sin and temptation? If we don't start here with understanding our basic purpose, then, as he says, we won't understand the necessity of conversion or the necessity of our continued growth in godliness.

And so we focus on this. And so it would be good to memorize 1 Corinthians 10:31 if you don't have that memorized. He created us in his image so that we would image forth his glory in the world.

We were made to be prisms refracting the light of God's glory into all of life. Why God should want to give us a share in shining with his glory is a great mystery.

[9:22] Call it grace or mercy or love. It is an unspeakable wonder. Once we were not, then we existed for the glory of God.

I mean, that is a wonder. So that's our purpose identified and defined. We're here to glorify God. Well, how comprehensive is that purpose for us?

Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do. All right. That's pretty comprehensive. So what are some of the other things that we would do besides eating and drinking?

I mean, I do a lot of that anyways. But there's other things that I do. Work. Work. Yeah. What goes into the eyes and what goes into the brain?

All right. So what I'm reading, what I'm looking at on Internet. A conversation. A conversation. All right.

[10:21] Okay. Okay. So now we've identified some of these different spheres by things that we do outwardly, whether it's our work, our words that we speak, or what goes into our brain.

So we're talking about both our inner man and our outer man. We're to be glorifying God. So it's very comprehensive. So I just glorify God when I'm at work.

Is that the only place I glorify God? Well, where else would I glorify God? In our home. In our home. Church. Church. Walmart.

Walmart. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Those clerks, especially. Yeah. Yeah. So we're talking about different places that we glorify God.

So we glorify God both in our inner man and our outer man and every place we go. Okay. Then there's another sphere that we haven't touched on.

[11:27] We've kind of touched on it. So do I just do it on Sundays? Every day. Every day. Every day. So that's how comprehensive this purpose is for us to live by.

We do it in our inner man and our outer man, wherever we go, and every time, every moment of our lives. So everything's covered.

This is a purpose that reaches every aspect of our lives. Everywhere we go and every minute, every second of the day. That's pretty comprehensive.

That's an ultimate purpose for which we live. So being made in the image of God, again, we were made to show forth the various aspects of the character of God that only humans could do.

We're special in creation in that way, being made in the image of God. Only we as human beings could show forth these various aspects of God.

[12:31] That puts us in a special place. To be human is to live out our original design to glorify God. That is our purpose as human beings.

And it's very good. I mean, these are basic statements, but statements we have to remember as we move through the day. It's basic to our humanity.

When we're witnessing to people and trying to lead them to Christ, we're seeking to lead them certainly to the place where they are glorifying God, their maker. But also trying to get them back to the place where they are.

This is who you are as a human being. I'm not trying to lead you to something that is strange for you as a human being.

This is basic to who you are as a human. And sin has led us away from that. So this is who I am created to be.

[13:31] And it's very good. It's not like God made creation and man said it's very good and then decided, Oh yeah, by the way, you're going to live for my glory. Glory. Now that was all part of it.

And then he said, and this is very good. So this is something we're going to call back to our mind too when we're faced with these different options of where we're going to go, say in a time of temptation.

Now God said for me to glorify him, that's my ultimate purpose. And that's very good for me. It certainly accomplishes his glory, but beyond that, it's very good for me.

And therefore, the conclusion is, this isn't. It doesn't accomplish my purpose, plus it's not good for me. So that's how basic some of these foundational truths are for us as we move through the week and as we're seeking to grow in godliness.

It brings praise to God and it brings about joyful living for us. So how do we glorify God? How does that come about in our lives?

[14:39] Now this is where I want to take a little bit of a parenthesis. I say little bit. I'm hoping it's going to be little bit. But you know how it is for me once I get up here and start talking a little bit more.

And then I rush at the end. But I did want to take a parenthesis here and think about this. We've identified a purpose and defined it somewhat, elaborated on it a little bit more, and how it's basic to us as human beings.

So does everybody do that? Is everybody living by that ultimate purpose? Of course, that's one of those questions you don't even need to answer. No, people are not doing that.

Our ultimate purpose has been rejected and exchanged by many people in the world, and we all did that at one time. And unfortunately, there are still times that we do it even as Christians.

That's why we're focusing on this series of growing together in godliness. But let's take a look at this. Romans 1, 18 through 25, and I don't have, or maybe I do have all those written down here.

[15:49] The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Since what may be known about

God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, has been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

So there it is, creation. The message that God has sent of his deity, his power is there, seen in creation. So men are without excuse when it comes to rejecting God, the supreme being. They need more than that to be saved and come to Christ, but the witness is there. And there's also the inner witness within that connects with that.

So we have these two witnesses. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him. So we see this rejection of ultimate purpose.

[16:55] But their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, actually they became fools. They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

And they worshipped and served created things rather than the creator who was forever praised. So here's this witness that God has provided, as I've said, both inside and outside.

And what are they doing with it? They're suppressing the truth. It means to keep it back, to push it back. This witness that God has provided.

Now there are some moral implications for the person that does acknowledge God's existence. Those two things are connected. You acknowledge that there's a God who exists, a supreme being, a God who is all-powerful.

[18:07] There are some implications to acknowledging that that is true. If he exists as the one who made all these things, including me, then he is higher than me, and there are some moral implications to that.

That person is obligated to submit to God and to do his will. But the unsaved person doesn't want to submit to God.

And therefore he pushes the reality of these witnesses away. He doesn't want to acknowledge them. And he does this through his continuing pursuit of life apart from God.

Suppresses the truth in unrighteousness. That's how he pushes it away. He gives himself to what he wants to do on a regular basis. That which is not pleasing or glorifying to God.

And he pursues his sin and wickedness. He refuses to acknowledge the moral implications and continues to go his own way. Now he doesn't eliminate the inner witness that's there.

[19:18] I mean, he's designed to be an individual that will worship God. But he's refusing to worship God. That doesn't mean he no longer worships anything.

It just means that he worships something else. That witness is still there. So he must do something about it. And what does he do? Well, he exchanges.

That's what we read in Romans 1. He exchanges worship of the one true God with worship of created things. Instead of living for God's glory, he sets himself up as God and ascribes greatest devotion to other things.

And pursues them as the ultimate provider of his happiness. And he's established and provided himself a new purpose in life.

One that he thinks will bring him happiness, contentment, and fulfillment. Sad, isn't it? Rejecting the one who's designed man with an ultimate purpose that will accomplish God's glory but also be the best for him.

[20:25] Of course, we've talked about the sinfulness of man and why he's doing that. He's forsaken the first commandment that says, You shall have no other gods before me.

Here's an interesting quote. A couple quotes coming up here by Nancy Piercy in one of her new books on finding truth. An idol is anything we want more than God.

Anything we rely on more than God. Anything we look to for greater fulfillment than God. And that's what's happening in the lives of unsafe people. And of course, it happens now and then with us as Christians.

There's no reason why we should be going back and functioning as an unbeliever. But we do that at times. And we need to grow in godliness. And we'll have some lessons on that in the future.

And identifying why is it that we make that transition. And how is that happening in us? And what do we need to do about it? But here's an interesting quote as well that you can give me your thoughts on.

[21 : 26] It's a quote from a book that Reese read recently. And he wanted me to read it. And the title is Choosing Courage. And some examples of heroes in life.

And many of them during war times. And here's an individual that was one of those heroes.

Received the Medal of Honor. And certainly he had done some good things in life.

But this was at the end of his life. And he said, In my nine plus decades, I've formed some views about life and living. I've concluded that we were all put on this earth for a purpose.

Good. It's there within. Men know that. That purpose is to make it within our capabilities a better place in which to live.

We can do this by painting a picture, writing a poem, building a bridge, protecting the environment, combating prejudice and injustice, and in a thousand other ways.

[22 : 27] The criterion is this. If a man leaves this earth a better place than he found it, then his life has been worthwhile. Well, what's wrong with that?

Roger. He gives self-blowing rather than saying, Well, thank you, Lord, for giving me those counts and capabilities. Okay, yeah. So man is the one who is set up as the determiner of what actually makes a better place.

Now, can you think of examples where that's not been so good? Hitler. Hitler. Hitler. He thought Germany would be a better place.

You know, you just, all you had to do was eliminate a certain group of people. Or one recently that was in our newspapers within the last two weeks. There was a country a number of years ago that wanted financial stability.

We want that. And they figured for the next generations it would be good for them to have a country that was financially stable.

[23 : 41] But what they decided was in order to accomplish that, they had to cut back on their population and determine that families should only have one child.

And any other pregnancies would need to be terminated. Or what if a country would ever come to the place of saying that in order to leave the world a better place, we need to redesign the family and marriage?

Now, can you imagine that ever happening? Well, you know, if we follow this kind of reasoning, that's where it would lead.

When we give up submission to God, acknowledgement of God, an ultimate purpose, it's not like we're not going to come up with any purposes at all.

We'll come up with other purposes, but they will be contrary to God's glory and contrary to what is good for us as his creatures. So, we want to be careful that we're living for the glory of God.

[24 : 54] Because in Romans 1, it shows some of the results of rejecting and exchanging the pursuit of God's glory. The people get what they want. God gives them over to what they're pursuing.

Their depraved desires, shameful lusts, and all they can contrive out of their depraved minds. And then they get what they don't want, God's judgment and broken lives.

That's what happened in the country of China and other countries as well that followed that same philosophy. And will happen with any individual that rejects God's way and his ultimate purpose to live for his glory.

Well, that's the end of the parentheses. I thought it was worth exploring and thinking about a little bit more. So, let's go back now to our ultimate purpose of glorifying God and identifying that, defining it. Now, we want to take a look at what actually does it look like? What does it look like when a person is living out the glory of God?

[26 : 01] What are some of your thoughts on that? Okay. I just read Bob Snell's letter. That man right now is in his glory reaching out to people and they're eating it up because they know nothing of that kind of love and that kind of outreach.

Okay. And so, what does that include? Roger's mentioned they don't understand. They're trying to figure out how to relate to someone who's loving them in that way.

Or other thoughts. What does it look like to be living out the glory of God? It's in your private life as well as your public life. Okay.

It's in your private life as well as your public life. So, what does that look like? Obeying his command. So, what does that look like? Like the life of Christ.

Yeah. The life of Christ. You know, we could sit here giving out all of these other examples, even getting down more specific and more specific. And what we're going to end up doing is describing the person of Christ.

[27 : 16] So, living for the glory of God looks like Jesus Christ. Did he glorify God? Yes. Of course he did.

He even said he did in his prayer in John 17.4. He says, I brought you glory on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Look at this verse in Hebrews 1.3.

The sun is the radiance of God's glory. And the exact representation of his being. Yeah. I mean, you can't get any more specific than that, than the person of Jesus Christ.

So, he was the only human, God-man, but still human, to completely glorify God in all he thought, spoke, and did.

So, for us to accomplish our ultimate purpose, we need to become like Christ. So, what needs to happen in order for us to become like Christ?

[28 : 22] Some of your thoughts again. What needs to happen in order for a person, a person, you know, we want every person to glorify God, to live for that basic, core, human purpose, to glorify God.

What needs to happen? It must be God working in us for the will of the people of the people. Okay. And when God is doing that, what will happen? What will be one of the first things that happens? Happens. Conversion. Yeah. The first thing that will happen, and that needs to happen, is that we need to be new creatures in Christ. You know, in my life prior to Christ, I was that person suppressing the truth.

I may have done it in a very moralistic way, or I may have done it in a very sinful, wicked way outwardly. Either situation, I'm still one who is repressing and suppressing and pushing the truth away from me.

And I'm doing that because at the core of who I am, I am without God, without Christ in the world. I'm one living out my sinful nature.

[29 : 42] And so, again, at the core of my being, I need to be changed. I need that new nature. Galatians 2.20.

Paul said, I've been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. That's what had to happen for the Apostle Paul.

He was living probably one of the most moralistic lives, following the law very strictly. But he realized that he needed to be a different person, God working in him.

Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body now, he says, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

So Paul became a different person. A person with a new nature. Christ, by his spirit, living in the Apostle Paul.

[30 : 41] Romans 6.6 also brings out the idea. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with. That we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

So some more, and there are many more verses there in Romans 6 that show this transformation that had to take place. This is who I was and where I was. I needed to be over here.

Once that conversion took place in my life, now I could be that person who pursues the glory of God. Remember that part of Piper's quote.

You know, as we understand our purpose, we understand the necessity of conversion. It had to be. I had to be a new person in Christ in order for me to be a person that even desired the glory of God, but that even would be able to live for the glory of God.

So what else needs to happen then? So there I am. I'm converted. What needs to happen next? If I'm going to glorify God.

[32 : 03] Okay, I'm going to make the word of God my standard for living. Okay, I've done that. I've been reading the word of God, coming to church, listening to the word of God, being taught.

So now I'm glorifying God. What needs to happen? You have to fight for sinful nature, for flesh nature. Okay. Because you are converted.

Okay, so, yep, I'm starting to recognize from my reading of the word of God that there are certain desires in me that don't accomplish that purpose of me being like Christ.

So, yeah, I'm going to push those away. What else has to happen? I think we need the work of the Spirit. Yep, yep, you're thinking right.

We do need the work of the Holy Spirit. And part of what's going on in me is a result of that Holy Spirit's working in me, that I am reading my Bible.

[33:04] I am listening to it as it's taught in church. I'm being aware that there's desires in me that aren't pleasing to God. So, the Holy Spirit is working in me.

What else has to happen? We push out the evil desires. We all know we can just, there's a void there. We've got to fill it with Christ's character.

Okay, so what you're saying is that I can't just stop with pushing it away. I have to welcome something else in to my life.

I need to be receiving something and actually doing something different. I mean, I don't really become like Christ until I am being like Christ.

I mean, I can understand that it's wrong to lie, and I can decide that, okay, I'm going to stop lying. But how will I stop lying?

[34:06] Tell the truth. Yeah, so that's when I become like Christ, when I become a truth teller. If I'm a thief and I'm stealing from people, I realize that's not glorifying to God.

I've got to stop stealing. So, what do I do instead of stealing? What do you do? You give away.

Well, how do I give away? You've got to work with your own hands. Okay, then I'll steal from myself and give it to people. And that's Ephesians 4.

The Apostle Paul goes through those various examples and illustrations of how you become, you live out your Christ-likeness.

Yeah, we're going to stop certain things, and we're going to grow in godliness. And that's what our other lessons are going to be about. So, conversion is really just the beginning.

[35:06] If we're to live out our true humanity and glorify God, then we'll need to be like Christ both in our nature and in our practice. We no longer conform to the way we did things prior to our conversion, but we need a transformation in the way that we think, speak, and act.

And it's interesting to see how Peter associated these two concepts. In 1 Peter 2, 9 through 12, he says, You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you might declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

You see that? There's another way of putting that. This is who you are now. You're different from these people outside, these people who have been persecuting you, different from what you used to be.

Now you're a chosen people. You're a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people belonging to God, that you might declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul.

[36:31] Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. And then also in 1 Peter 4, 11, Peter says, If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.

If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ, that him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

The dexology of it all. For these people living regular lives like we live every day, but we're going through severe persecution, wondering how do you live in this world today?

Peter's saying, Well, one of the things that you need to remember is that your chosen people and all this so that you would show forth the virtues of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

That's basic to your successful living out what you believe. You've got to remember this if that's going to happen.

[37:39] And that's even something that God is working to accomplish in us. In fact, he's working everything together for that purpose of conforming us to the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8, 28. We're familiar with that verse, but it's good to connect verse 29 with that. We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to

his purpose.

For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. So that's what God is seeking to accomplish. And he'll use the good and the bad in our lives for that good of transforming us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. So we're not in this alone.

And we saw some of that last week as well, when he took a look at those provisions that God has made. And then our last point also, that our growth in godliness will one day be complete and will glorify God forever.

[38:47] I mean, there's days that we wish that would be a lot sooner than what it is. When we know, you know, I've said it again. I spoke like the fool again.

How in the world did I get here? When am I ever going to learn? Will I ever change? Well, yes, you can change now. But there is coming a day that the work will be done.

Jude 24, To him who is able to keep you from falling, to present you before his glorious presence, without fault and with great joy. In 1 John 3, 2, dear friends, now we are children of God.

And what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him. For we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure.

So we've got that wonderful hope. I'm not there yet. But I'm still going to pursue it. I'm going to still orient my life, discipline myself in this direction of godliness.

[39:54] And one of the ways I do that is by remembering my ultimate purpose. In Ephesians 1, 13 and 14. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

I mean, that's what we will be doing throughout all eternity. We'll be doing it in different ways. But we'll be accomplishing our ultimate purpose.

And that is to be to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Now, what's nice is that starts now. At our conversion and our growth in godliness, we can be enjoying the fruits of that that come from being people who long for and are committed to and are endeavoring to live for the glory of God.

Well, we need God's help to do that. And he's provided that help. Next week, we'll pick up on the next part of our series, some of the action steps we take in order to grow together in godliness.

[41:21] Time is up. Any quick comments, questions? No time. I didn't leave you any time to do all that. Well, it's something you can talk about today as you're together.

And we'll be looking at ways that we can do that even more effectively. Thank you. You're dismissed. Thank you. Thank you.