

PLANNED FOR GOD'S PLEASURE

Based on Rick Warren's

The Purpose Driven Life – Part 2

*Dr. Thomas R. Logsdon, Pastor
Sugar Creek United Methodist Church*

1022 New City Road

Chatham, Illinois

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The Scripture

Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp. For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds.

The Sermon

Once upon a time, there was a man named Bill Mallory who traveled to India to discover the purpose of life. He didn't find it there and so, dejected, he returned home. Pulling into a Chevron gas station, he saw a

sign which read, "As you travel, ask us." So he did. Every time he stopped at a Chevron station, he pointed to the sign and said, "I'm a traveler. I have a question. What is the purpose of life?"

Here are the answers he got.

The first guy said, "I'm new here." The second replied, "I don't remember anything in the manual about that." Another said, "I'm not much for church myself, sir." One gave him a leering look and a wink, whatever that means. Most just gave him a blank stare and cleaned his windshield. He kept asking at every Chevron station he visited. Finally, Mallory receive a call from the corporate office. The man on the other end of the phone said, "We understand that you've been asking our dealers questions and getting unsatisfactory answers. Why don't you write your question down and send it to us with a self-addressed stamped envelope. Mallory wrote, "What is the purpose of life?" and sent it to the Chevron Corporation. A few weeks later, he received their response. In the envelope was an application for a credit card!

If you want to know the purpose of life, you're not going to find it at a gas station, not even one of those huge traveler's centers. You're not going to hear it on a talk show – not Oprah, not Montel, not Jerry Springer. You're not going to read it in a self-help book. You're not going to discover it at some seminar. If you want to know the purpose of life, you have to ask the **Author** of Life. If you want to know the purpose of **your** life, you have to ask your **Creator** or read your **owner's** manual. You were made by God and for God and, until you understand that, your life's not going to make any sense to you or anyone else.

We are now a week into these *40 Days of Purpose*. Last week we learned that God made you to love you. Today we look at the first of God's 5 purposes for your life. The Bible says of God in Revelation 4:12, "*You created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created.*" In other words, you were made for **God's** pleasure, not your own. Don't get me wrong. We learned last week that God loves

you and wants you to be happy. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I came that you might have life and have it abundantly." Let me say that again: God loves and wants you to be happy, but that's not **why** God made you. God made you for **His** pleasure, not your own. He **made** you because He **loves** you and wants to **enjoy** you. You were planned for **God's** purpose.

Let me show you what I mean. How many of you are parents? How many of you like watching your children? I love going down to Blackburn and hearing Ronnie sing or seeing him act in a play. It was cool last summer at the Muni watching him play the part of a Winkie in The Wizard of Oz, even if he did get beat up by the Cowardly Lion! When our children were small, it was fun sneaking into their rooms, just to watch them sleep. That's how God feels about you and me. He doesn't **spy** on us, trying to **catch** us doing something wrong. He's **proud** of us, at least most of the time, and He enjoys watching us **be** who we are.

God was there at your birth, smiling from ear to ear. You were

conceived in love, God's love. You were planned for God's pleasure.

Last week we saw how you were created to be loved by God. Today we see the flip side of that, your first purpose in life, which is to love God back. You were planned for God's pleasure and, because He **loves** you, nothing gives Him **more** pleasure than to feel you loving Him back. Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-38, "*Love the Lord your God. This is the first and greatest commandment.*" Why? Because that's what God wants! That's why He **made** you in the first place!

Why is our love important to God? Well, have you ever loved somebody who **didn't** love you back? It's the worst feelings in the world. You pour yourself out, making a fool of yourself to get their attention, and nothing works. You feel like you're going to die and then you wish you would. No matter how old we get, it still feels like we're back in 7th grade. God **made** you to **love** you and His greatest desire on **earth** is for **you** to love Him back.

That's what we mean by "worship." Worship is not something we

do at church. Worship is opening ourselves to God's love, basking in that love, and loving God back. It's not **what** you do, it's **why** you do it. It's **attitude**, not action. Write this down. My first purpose in life is to **worship God**. It can happen in a church building, but it's not limited to sacred space. Worship is attitude, approach, the way we think and feel and live our lives in response to God's love.

How do we learn to worship? Let's turn to our Owner's Manual and find out. The Bible says in Romans 12:1, "*Because of God's great mercy to us... offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service and pleasing to Him. This is the true worship that you should offer.*" Worship is our **response** to God's love.

When someone says, "I didn't get anything out of worship," it's proof they don't **understand** what worship is all about. Don't get me wrong, we work hard at Sugar Creek to make worship as relevant as possible to as many people as we can but, ultimately, worship is what **we** do for God, not what the **church** does for us.

So **how** do we worship? Our owner's manual says in Mark 12:30, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.*" In other words:

- Love God **thoughtfully** (with all your mind)
- Love God **passionately** (with all your heart and soul), and
- Love God **practically** (with all your strength).

Let's look at these one at a time.

First of all, the Bible says to love God with all our mind, in other words, **thoughtfully**. God gave you a brain and expects you to use it. He doesn't want you to follow Him blindly without thinking. He doesn't expect you to check your head with your hat at the door. Instead, like Dickens's *Ghost of Christmas Present*, God stands at the front door of our church and says, "Come in and know me better, man (or woman).

Second, God wants us to love Him **passionately**, with all our heart and soul. He wants us to love Him with every fiber of our being, because that's how much He loves us.

Third, God wants us to love Him **practically**, with all our strength. Everyone is wired differently and everyone has a unique combination of strengths, skills, interests, experience, passion, education, and abilities and God expects us to use them to demonstrate our love for Him.

Did you know that, powerful as God is, He cannot have three things – our **attention**, our **affection**, and our **ability** – unless we freely give them. You cannot make somebody love you and neither can God. When we give God our **attention**, we are loving Him with our **minds**. When we give God our **affection**, we are loving Him with our **hearts** and **souls**. When we give God our **abilities**, we are loving Him with our **strength**. When we give these three things back to God in love, that's **worship**.

Do you love God? Then spend some time with Him each day. Love Him with your **mind** by **giving** Him your full attention. The Bible says in Matthew 6:6, *“Find a quiet secluded place, so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as*

you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense His grace.” You can worship God anywhere – at church, in your car, in your backyard, in the corner of your living room. **Where** you worship doesn't matter. Just go there on a regular basis and spend time with God.

Worship is more than **attention**, however. It is also expressing our **affection** toward God. God wants us to love Him with our **minds**, but He also wants us to love Him with our **hearts** and **souls**. He wants to hear us say, “I love you, God” and know that we mean it.

The Bible says in 1st John 4:19, “*We love Him, because He first loved us.*” God loves us and He wants us to love Him back. God says in Hosea 6:6, “*I don't want your sacrifices -- I want your love! I don't want your offerings -- I want you to know me!*”

Worship is focusing our **attention** on God – that's loving Him with our **minds**. **Worship** is expressing our **affection** toward God – that's loving Him with our **hearts** and **souls**. **Worship** is using our

abilities **for** God. That's worshipping Him with our **strength**.

How many of you are married? Then you **know** that it's important to love your spouse with your **attention** and **affection**, but you also know that there are chores to be done. Janice sometimes says to me, "I know that you love me, but empty the dishwasher!" When you use your God-given abilities for **God**, you're giving practical expression to your love for Him. The Bible says in Colossians 3:23, "*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people.*" You don't have to join a monastery to worship God, though some do. You don't have to spend all day in prayer. You just need to do what you do as though you were doing it for God. Going to church each week is important, but most of us spend far more time at **work** than we do at **church**. Praying each day is important, but most students spend more time in **class** than they do in **prayer**. What if you could turn your **work** time and your **school** time and your **play** time into **worship** time?

It's easy. Just do all that you do to the glory of God. The farmer on his combine can pray – with eyes open, of course. He can pray, “Thank you God for this crop you've given me. I've done my part but, without the rain and sun and all the other things that I needed at just the right time, my crop would never grow. Thanks to you, I can feed my family this year and together we can feed a hungry world. You made the land. You made the sky. You made the sun. You made the rain. Thank you, God, for letting me do what I love and for making me successful at it.”

I don't care if you're a butcher, a baker, or candlestick maker. You can do whatever you do for God. You might be a carpet layer or carpet cleaner, an attorney, a nurse, a stay-at-home mom, a student, an executive, a manager, a sales clerk, a truck driver, or a doctor. It doesn't matter **what** you do – so long as your work benefits other people. What matters is **who** you do it for. God wired you with certain interests and abilities. Most of the time, He doesn't care what you **do** for living. He just wants to know, “Are you doing it for Me?” If you're good at

repairing things, then say, “God, I want to repair things this week as though I were doing it for you.” If you’re a cook, then say “God, I’m going to cook this meal, whether it’s for my family or for my restaurant, as though I were cooking for You.” And if you’re good at filing and organizing say, “God, I’m going to file these things as though I were filing them for You.” If you can turn work, study, and play into worship, then you’re worshipping God 24 hours a day. Not just in church. God doesn’t want worship to just be a church thing. Our time in church is designed to teach you how to spend your whole life worshipping God.

Yes, there are people called to the ordained ministry. There are people called to missionary service. There are people called to social work and counseling and teaching. If God calls you to a particular service, then answer that call or you’ll never be happy. Most of the time, however, God doesn’t call us to a particular **career** – He calls us to a **relationship** with Him. He gives us the inclinations and attitudes that affect the type of job that makes us happy and the job that make us

miserable. All He really wants from us is to honor Him through our work, so long as that work is honorable.

Peterson translates Romans 12:1a, "*Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, your eating, your going to work, your walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering.*" When you can say, "God, I'm taking out this garbage for You. I'm making these beds for you. I'm milking this cow for you. I'm cleaning this garage for you. I'm rebuilding this engine for you." Then you've begun to get a handle on what *The Purpose Driven Life* is all about. **Everything** can be turned into an act of worship, if you put your head, hands, heart and soul into it, if you work as though you were working for God.

God's not into incense or candles or ritual. If they help you draw closer to Him, great, but what He's **really** looking for is the kind of worship that says "God, whatever I do, I'm going to do it for You." When you can do **that**, your whole life has become an act of worship. Real worship, you see, is **lifestyle**. Choices become actions, actions

become habits, habits become character, and character defines who we are.

Will you pray with me?

“Dear God, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you. Forgive me for thinking and acting like You don't matter. Today I realize that You made me to love me and that the first purpose of my life is to know and love You back. I'm amazed that You yearn for a relationship with me and I'm astonished that You care so much about the details of my life. Most of all, I'm thunderstruck that You would come to earth to die for me. I don't understand it, but I say “Wow!” Forgive me, God, for not worshipping You. Help me focus my full attention **on** You. Help me turn my **work** into **worship**. Help me to love you with the love You deserve – **thoughtfully** with my mind, **passionately** with my heart and soul, **practically** with the interests and abilities you've given me. You gave me my life. Today I give it back to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.