

# PLANNED FOR GOD'S PLEASURE

## *"What On Earth Am I Here For?" – Part 2*

Several years ago the Chicago Tribune ran a true story about a man named Bill Mallory. Bill Mallory traveled to India to discover the purpose of life. But he didn't find the answer there. So after returning, he noticed a sign at Chevron gas station that simply said, "As you travel, ask us." So every time he pulled into a Chevron station, he would look to the sign and say, "I'm a traveler. I'd like to ask you a question. What is the purpose life?" These were the real answers he got. I'm not making this up. The first guy said, "Sorry. I'm new here." The second guy said, "I don't remember anything in the manual about that." One guy gave him a leering look and a wink, whatever that meant. However, most people just gave him a blank stare, cleaned his windshield; but he kept asking at all the Chevron stations. One day Mallory got a phone call from Chevron Customer Relations. He said, "We understand you've been asking our dealer questions and getting unsatisfactory answers." The man suggested that he write out his question and send it to Chevron Corporate with a self-addressed stamped envelope. So Bill Mallory wrote, "What is the purpose of life?" and sent it to Chevron Gas Company. A couple of weeks later, the envelope was returned. The only thing in it was an application for a credit card!

If you want to know the purpose of life, you're not going to find it in a gas station. You're not going to find it on a talk show. You're not going to find it in a self-help book. If you want to know the purpose of life, you have to either talk to the Creator who made you, or look in the owner's manual. You were made by God and you were made for God. So if you want to know your life's purpose, turn to God, and to His Word, the Bible. Until then, life isn't going to make sense.

Today, we're going to look at the first of God's five purposes for your life. Revelation 4:12 says "**You (God) created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created.**" Circle the phrase "*for your pleasure.*" God made you just to love you. What I'm saying to you, this is so fundamental, is that the number-one calling in your life is not a role, it's not a responsibility, it's not a bunch of rules, it's not regulations, it's not ritual, it's not religion. It's a *RELATIONSHIP*.

**The first purpose of your life, is God wants to enjoy a *RELATIONSHIP* with you.**

This is going to surprise some of you. Christianity is not a religion. People try to make it a religion. They try to make it about rules and regulations and rituals. But it's not about that. Jesus said it's about a relationship. God sent Christ so you could have a relationship, with God. Because God is love and He wants you to learn to experience His love.

God wants you to be His son or His daughter. He wants you in His family.

Let that sink in a little bit. The first purpose of your life is not to serve God. The first purpose of your life is not to obey God. No! The first purpose of your life is to let God love you.

God didn't create you in the first place to *do* something. He created you in the first place to *receive* something. If you understand this revolutionary truth it's going to transform your life. Your number-one purpose in life is not to do something for God; it's to receive something from God. You were made to be a receiver, a benefactor of God's love. Let that sink in!

God IS love. And He made you and the entire universe to be receivers of His love and grace.

Now, when you receive God's love, He has brought you into a relationship with Him. And you respond by loving God back. there's a word for this. It is the word "worship." Worship is a 2-way street. God comes to you and loves you. You respond. You love God back.

A big problem, however, is that worship is misunderstood. When I say the word "worship," what do you think of? You may think of singing. You may think of ritual or communion or going to the church building. But worship is far, far more than all those things. Worship is more than an hour a week worship SERVICE. It's that, but worship is ALSO what you do 24/7/52.

Since worship is receiving God's love and grace and loving Him back, worship happens all week, all year, all life long!

To worship God is a reason you're living. Write this down. **My first purpose in life is to worship God.** It's your highest priority. It is your number one purpose in life – to love God in ALL you do.

We're going to look at what does it really mean to worship. Now, probably the best verse that defines worship, your very first purpose is this-Romans 12, verse 1. Let's read it aloud together. Would you read it with me? "***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.***" Now, I want you to circle the word "because."

Notice it says "***BECAUSE*** of God's great mercy to us." This means God's love and mercy is already there, already in your life, already touching your heart. This means God acted first and you respond back. So **worship is my response** to God's love. Worship is just the way I react, I respond, to God when He loves me.

In the worship SERVICE God comes to you. He really comes down to you in His Word, when it is read or spoken. God is there, working in your life to forgive you, reassure you, give you new hope, bring direction. God really comes down to you in Baptism. In the water He forgives. God comes to you in His Supper. Jesus is clear when He talks about the bread and wine: "***This is My Body. This is My Blood ... given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.***"

God comes down to us. That's one direction. And then we respond back, "THANK YOU God for forgiving me. I PRAISE YOU GOD, that you love me. I HONOR YOU God because You come to guide me, and renew me, and give me hope." That's the 2<sup>nd</sup> direction on this 2-way street.

In everyday life, God comes to feed you, clothe you, give you each new day, give you each breath. He gives the rain and the sunshine, the harvest coming in from the fields. He gives family, friends, skills, interests, abilities, beauty and laughter. And we respond back, we worship God in our everyday lives saying, "I thank You God, that You are generous to all, that You created the sun and give the rain so that I have food. I thank You that You designed the world amazingly. You created my eyes to see beauty all around me. You created my senses to enjoy a hot cup of coffee on a cold October morning, and a glass of chilled wine at the end of a long day." God gives. We respond back in love. 2-way street. That's worship.

Notice what this verse says we do - we "*offer.*" We offer our THANKS. "*Thank You, God, for making me and knowing me and saving me.*" We offer God our PRAISE. "*I praise You, God, for being God of all – Creator and Ruler of all.*"

“Offering” means **worship is giving back to God**. He gives to us, and we give back to Him. Now, the question is, when it says, “*offer*” What am I supposed to offer? I mean, what do you give a God who has everything? You think finding Christmas gifts is hard for some people? What do you give a God who’s got everything? He made the world. He made you. He made the universe. What do you give Him?

I’ll tell you what you give Him...you give Him **YOUR LOVE**. You give Him your love. In Mark chapter 12, “***Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.***”

I want to point out that God wants me to love Him three ways: First, God wants me to love Him **thoughtfully**. It says, “love Him with your mind.” Thoughtfully. In other words, He wants you to think through, to not just do it without thinking. Second, God wants me to love him **passionately**. He says, “***with all your heart and all your soul.***” And Third, He says, I want you to love me **practically**. Practically. “***love Me with all your strength***”, with your abilities.

You see, the truth is that even though God created the entire world and the universe and He created you, **there are three things God does not have unless you give them to Him**. He doesn’t have your **attention** unless you give it to Him. That’s loving God with your mind. He doesn’t have your **affection**, unless you give it to Him. That’s loving God with your heart and your soul. And God doesn’t have your **ability**, unless you give it to Him. That’s loving God with your strength. Whenever you take the things God has given to you and you give them back to God, that, friends, is the heart of worship.

So, **worship is focusing my attention on God**. It is focusing my mind, my thoughts, my attention on God.

You know, in a lot of religions, the idea of worship is to put your mind into neutral, sort of lose your mind to the universe. But the truth is, God wants us to worship Him thoughtfully. It takes getting our mind focused on God. Not just going through the motions, but really, really thinking about it. Which isn’t always easy to do. Have you ever prayed on autopilot? You know what I mean? You pray before a meal, you pray— blah, blah, blah -- Amen? And if somebody asked you what you just prayed, you’d have no idea. Do you ever zone out in church, (not when I’m speaking,) but sometimes, do you ever zone out in church? That reminds us that it takes energy and attention to focus on God.

You know why God wants your focus? God wants your focus because He is focused on you. Look at what the Bible has to say to us in Psalm 139 verses 1 through 3. “***You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and You know all about me. You know when I am resting or when I am working***” -- Would you read this last part with me -- “***You notice everything I do and everywhere I go.***” God has focused his attention on you. Did you know that? God pays constant attention to you. He never takes His eyes off of you.

Sometimes guys will ask me, you know, “my wife, my kids, they say I don’t love them. But I do things for them. I work every day for them, why don’t they feel loved by me?” Because they want your attention. Attention is an incredible expression of love. And God puts His attention constantly on us.

Remember the first time you fell in love? You just couldn’t get that person off your mind? You thought about them when you woke up in the morning. You thought about them all day long? That’s an infatuation sometimes for us and it wears off. But God’s love for us is eternal. He is always focused on us. He wants us to focus our heart and our attention on Him.


Now, how do you do that? Well, you can start doing that by just **establishing a daily time with God**. Just a few minutes during the day. I don't care when you do it -- beginning of the day, middle, end of the day. We all need time to stop everything else and just be with God. Talk to Him, read His Word. The Bible talks about that in Matthew chapter 6, verse 6, when it says this, ***"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."***

Would you circle a couple of words in this practical verse with me? Circle the word "place." You've got to **find a place** to do this. You just find a place -- your car on the way to work, someplace in your backyard, a corner of your living room where you can focus on God. Circle the word also in that verse, "simply." Just be with God simply. No ceremony, **no fancy words**. You're just there with Him, talking to Him. And then circle also the word "honestly." Just **be yourself**. I want to relieve some of you of some pressure.

Start with a short prayer asking God to speak to You thru His Word, the Bible.

You can use a devotion guide. Here at St. Paul, we give out free the Portals of Prayer booklets. Two devotions I like even MORE are



and  Both of those you can subscribe to get their emails early every morning. The Time of Grace email has video devotions 5 days a week. And both have apps for your phone so you can get lots of other articles, and blogs, and people to pray for you.

Yet, you don't absolutely need to use a devotion guide. As you grow up in faith, you don't need to exclusively rely on *others* to feed you. You learn to feed yourself, spiritually. A great method is just to get a Bible, and remember the word "SOAP."

**S = Scripture. Read & Re-Read a portion of Scripture**

**O = Observation. What's the main message?**

**A = Application. How does this apply to my life today?** You can write this down in a note book or a journal. Then,

**P = Prayer. What's my prayer regarding this?**

And as you do this, focusing on God has incredible benefits in life. Look at the next verse in our outline, the Bible tells us in Isaiah 26, verse 3, ***"you will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on You!"*** When you focus on yourself, the inevitable result are thoughts of worry, insecurity, anxiety, guilt, fear, discouragement. But when that focus shifts from me to God, from you to God, all of a sudden, you begin to sense gratitude and hope and confidence and love.

Now, not only is worship focusing my attention on God, it's also **expressing my affection** to God. Expressing my affection. This is loving God with your heart and soul.

Read this next verse out of the Bible with me. Exodus 34, it says there, ***"He is the God who is passionate about his relationship with you."*** Circle that word "passionate." I've been married 37 years to Sue. How about if I walked up to my wife one day and I say, "Honey, here are some flowers for you. And I am giving you these flowers for three strategic reasons: Point No. 1, I am your husband. Point No. 2, it is our anniversary. Point No. 3, husbands are supposed to give their wives flowers on their anniversary. So here." Wouldn't she be thrilled? I don't think so. Why? She doesn't want duty. She wants desire. God doesn't want your duty. He wants your desire. God doesn't want -- "Oh, okay.

I better go worship.” “Oh, I love you, God” *[said in a monotone voice]*. God doesn’t want duty. He doesn’t want ritual and religion and rules and regulation. He wants a relationship.

Now, the background & history of Lutherans is that Lutherans haven’t been really expressive people. They’re much more Stoic. Somber & Silent. Other Christians worship with hands uplifted in praise. That’s not necessary to do, and maybe not comfortable for YOU, but that can be a wonderful way to offer ourselves & our love to God. Lifting up hands in the air in worship is not a BETTER way, or a more spiritual way, to worship than not lifting your hands. It’s just a *DIFFERENT* way to express affection for God in worship.

We have to keep in mind that God comes to us through the means of grace, which are His Word, the Bible, Baptism, and Holy Communion. God doesn’t come to us through our emotion, and we don’t go up to meet God through our emotion. No one gets more of God by being emotional – but our emotions can be ways of expressing OUR love BACK to God. Just as worshipping with heads bowed in humble, quiet, reflective worship.

Worship is focusing my attention on God. It is expressing my affection to God, and it is **Using my abilities** for God. This is loving God with all your strength.

I have been married long enough to know that, yes, my wife likes me to tell her, “I love you, Sue.” And I try to tell her that every day. And she likes me to kiss her and express affection with a hug. But there’s another kind of love that you need, too, to back it up. That’s practical expressions of love. When she comes home from the grocery store, she really appreciates it if I come out to unload the bags from the car and carry it all in. Sometimes there are bathrooms to be cleaned, and things that need to be fixed. That’s the practical way that I use my abilities to show, I really do love you and it’s not just empty words.

Notice this next verse, Colossians 3:23, read it with me. ***“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people.”*** Now, if you get this verse, it will absolutely revolutionize your life. You’ll never be the same once you understand this verse. Notice it again. ***“Whatever you do”*** – that means anything – ***“work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people.”*** You see, you don’t have to join a monastery to worship more. You don’t have to have a quiet time with God for five hours a day. You don’t have to go to a church service every day of the week. To worship with your life you just change who you’re working for. And when you change who you’re working for, your work becomes worship.

Now, if you don’t get anything else we’ve said today, I want you to get this one truth, because it will revolutionize your life. **In life it’s not what you do that matters; it is Who you do it for.** It’s not what you do that matters; it’s Who you do it for.

If you’re a truck driver or an attorney or a doctor or nurse or whatever. God wants to know, “Are you doing it for Me?”, whatever you’re doing. And that turns work into worship, and then you’re worshipping God 24 hours a day. God doesn’t want worship to just be a church thing. He wants it to be your whole life, to worship God with your life. You see, real worship is a lifestyle. And, that’s the kind of worship God loves.

The Bible says you were planned for God’s pleasure. You were made to know and love God. So I challenge you to make as the No 1 goal of your life before everything else, getting to know and love God, because that brings Him pleasure. You make as your goal what Paul said in the last verse on your outline, he said, ***“So we make it our goal to please Him.”*** There’s not a better goal in life to have than that one right there.