

What's Next? *a Baggins AND a Took*

Over the last ten years or so, “Lord of the Rings” movies have been intensely popular. The movies are based on J.R.R. Tolkien’s story *The Hobbit*. It’s the story, if you don’t know it, of 12 dwarves who, under the direction of Gandalf the wizard and Torin Oakenshield, the head dwarf, recruit the hobbit Bilbo Baggins, and they head off on a long journey to rob a dragon’s lair. Bilbo is their “thief,” – he’s the one appointed, without any say in the matter, to outwit Smaug, the dragon, and take his hoard of treasure.

It’s an odyssey of tight scrapes and narrow escapes, danger and wonder all the way. They meet elves and trolls, giants and goblins, spiders as big as ponies, wolves that talk, a man who turns into a bear. They slither down caves, scramble through forests, run across long fields. They tell riddles and solve them. It’s a journey of luck and courage, of wrong-turns turned shortcuts, of accidents that save the day. Along the way, their resolve strengthens and their hearts soften, and – slowly, slowly, slowly – foolishness gives way to wisdom. The journey changes them – all of them – forever.

Bilbo, the hobbit, never wanted to go. Or, he did want to go. That’s the thing. Bilbo is a Baggins, and Bagginses love comfort, protection, and routine. They have no higher ambition than to be home for dinner on time and to get a good night’s sleep. They don’t like to travel, to explore, or to discover. They just want to curl up snug in their own little lives and never venture out much past the local village. To do anything more is too dangerous and foolish to them.

But Bilbo has Took blood in him, too. The Tookes are a different sort of creature. They are curious, restless, a bit wild. Tookes have an **appetite** for danger, a **hunger** for adventure, a craving for **discovery**. They want to head out over the horizon – anything less is too safe and boring.

In Bilbo, the Baggins blood and the Took blood mix. The Baggins in him shrinks back from danger and interruption; the Took in him **longs** for it. The Baggins bones in him cling to comfort, while the Took blood is **bored** with comfort. In the end, the Took wins out and the result is an unforgettable and timeless story.

What J.R.R. Tolkien was trying to get across so long ago when he wrote *The Hobbit* is what Jesus wants for you, and it’s what we’ve discovered over these past 42 days as we’ve focused on What it is that we are here in this life for.

I’m a Baggins. So are you. I’m also a Took. Every one of us should be – MUST be!

A part of me would like to stay right here, tucked up in the safeness of routine, attend a church service once in a while, hear again that Jesus loves me, and ask nothing more of me. But another part itches to go plunder a dragon’s hoard – come what may.

Jesus wants you to be a Baggins -- To know God, to know Him in all His beauty and tenderness – to come to Him and be forgiven – to know that God’s pleasure is to take delight in you. Jesus wants you to finally stop from your busy life, and bask in God’s unconditional affirmation of you. Jesus wants you to RECEIVE His amazing love FOR you, and love Him back – with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

AND Jesus wants you to be a Took -- To go – to live completely and boldly for Him alone. No holding back, fears cast aside, courageously serving, growing, doing life deeply with

other Christ-followers, and sharing what Jesus means to you with people who don't know Him.

A Baggins AND a Took – both! Both are God's blessing to you. That's God's plan for you -- That's what we've been discovering during the last 6 weeks together. And the stories from you have been wonderful! Stories of lives changed from discovering God's amazing love for you in Jesus – and stories of lives changed by discovering the bold purposes God has for your living.

You see, life is all about **God, not me.** (write that down) **It's all about God,** not me. The Bible says in Hebrews 2:10, "**God is the one who made all things and all things are for His glory. He wanted to have many children share His glory.**" You were made by God and for God.

The Bible says, "**Everything got started in Him and finds its purpose in Him.**" This is the most basic truth you have to learn about life; that life is not about you, it is about God. You exist for God, not vice versa -- **and until you understand that, life doesn't make sense.**

Now, when you understand that, doesn't that change everything? Doesn't that just kind of change your priorities and your perspective and a lot of other things?

The second thing God's been teaching us these last 42 days is: that **God still does miracles.** (write that down) God is active and living TODAY. He's not just the God of long ago – He cares & loves & works in our lives today.

We would be here all day if I told you every miracle that has happened during these 6 weeks. People have discovered their ministry and started serving for the first time; developed the habit of having a time with God everyday, people have talked about their faith with others more than ever before, many people are getting connected in fellowship with other Christ-followers in a Small Group, and we've seen many people extending invitations to friends and neighbors who don't yet know Jesus as their Savior and lives are being transformed.

There are so many things that God has done in the last 6 weeks, so many, many miracles. God is a miracle-working God and nothing is impossible to Him. He is good. And He is worthy of our praise. Let's thank God for his graciousness for all that He's done through the 6 weeks of *What On Earth Am I Here For?*

God's desire for you is that you rejoice in His love for you -- That you soak in His unconditional affirmation, that you rejoice in Jesus' forgiveness. He loves you so much! AND God's desire for you is to RESPOND to Him in total, complete, bold, courageous devotion to Him.

But why? Isn't that unreasonable for God to desire that we give Him complete, full, 100%, courageous devotion? Why is 20%, or 50%, or 80 or 90% devotion to God so upsetting to God? Why isn't partial devotion to Him, OK? Why does God not **only** want you to soak in His love, but reciprocate His love? **Because He's so fully devoted to you!** He has boldly, courageously, fully invested Himself in you! He has – and continues, every day – to pour out so much of Himself in you!

He has given you life itself – the air you breath, the ability to think and feel and explore the wonder of this world He created. God has given you people to love, and who love you – smiles and laughter, tears and joy that make life worth living. He has given you homes, cars, money – a luxurious standard of living that is unparalleled in the history of the world. You have talents and abilities. Freedoms that most people in the world will never experience.

And most importantly, God has given to you HIMSELF. No where is His love shown deeper and clearer than when He Himself, came down from heaven, to be your brother. Jesus Christ lived and died for you. God invested Himself in you when Jesus was tortured, and He was nailed to Good Friday's cross where He took on HIMSELF all the punishment of hell that YOU deserve for YOUR wrongs. And when He rose again, He came out of Easter's tomb victorious – to guarantee YOUR forgiveness. Now, you're set free from yesterday's guilt! You have heaven to look forward to; You have the power of the Holy Spirit within you to live and love in a new way; You have a friend in heaven – Jesus – whom you can call upon any time – day or night.

Friends, Is God fully-devoted to you? YOU BET!! 100%!! OUR FULL, 100%, bold, courageous, adventurous devotion to God then isn't radical, or extreme, or unreasonable. Your FULL devotion to God is NORMAL. NORMAL!! Your complete, courageous living for Jesus is NORMAL for EVERY Christ-follower.

Jesus' blessing to you is for you to be a Baggins -- To know God, to know Him in all His tenderness – to come to Him and be forgiven – to know that God's pleasure is to take delight in you. AND Jesus wants you to be a Took -- To go – to live completely and boldly for Him alone. No holding back, fears cast aside, courageously worshipping, serving, growing, doing life deeply with other Christ-followers, and sharing with those who don't know Jesus what He means to you. A Took and a Baggins both – Both are God's blessing to you. That's God's plan for you -- That's what we've been discovering during the last 6 weeks together.

We've learned that **we're put on earth for 5 purposes**. We were put on earth to respond boldly, fully, courageously to God's love by living out God's 5 purposes for our lives. [Proverbs 16:4, "The Lord has made everything for His purpose."] Fill these in on your message notes. (I'm counting on you to know these by now.)

- Number one, I was planned for what? For **God's pleasure**. I was planned for God's pleasure. The Bible word for that is "**worship**."
- Secondly, I was formed for **God's family**. Family. I was formed for God's family. And the Bible word for that is "**fellowship**." (We're on a roll now.)
- I was created to become **like Christ**. And the Bible word for that is "**discipleship**," becoming like Jesus Christ.
- And then the fourth purpose, I was shaped to **serve God**. I was shaped to serve God. The Bible word for that is "**ministry**," that's what God made me for.
- Then the last purpose, the fifth purpose, I was made for a **mission**. And the Bible word for that is "**evangelism**."

Let's say those together again now that we all have them.

I WAS....	BIBLE WORD:
Planned for <u>God's pleasure</u>	<u>Worship</u>
Formed for <u>God's family</u>	<u>Fellowship</u>
Created to become <u>like Christ</u>	<u>Discipleship</u>
Shaped to <u>serve God</u>	<u>Ministry</u>

Made for a mission

Evangelism

That's the purpose of life. That's why God put me here. That's why God put you here – to RESPOND to God's love by DOING these things in our lives and through our lives. And dedicating our lives to Jesus and His purposes for us is NORMAL – normal for Christ-followers.

What we've experienced and done these past 6 weeks is not unusual – rare, unlikely to be experienced again. Living in these 5 purposes is NORMAL life for Christ-followers.

You know, friends, **THERE IS NOTHING AS BEAUTIFUL AS THE CHURCH WHEN IT IS FUNCTIONING!** During *What On Earth Am I Here For*, we've been blessed to see how God desires for His Church to function. In Acts 2 the Church functioning rightly is described – and it's beautiful!

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:42-47

There is nothing like the local church when she is working rightly! Her beauty is indescribable. Her power is breathtaking. Her potential is unlimited. She comforts grieving people and heals broken people as she enfolds them in the fellowship of loving relationships. The church working rightly builds bridges to seekers who don't yet know Jesus, and offers God's truth to the confused. The church provides resources to those who are in need, and opens her arms to the forgotten, the downtrodden, the disillusioned. The church enables people to break the slavery of addiction, and offers belongingness to a lonely world. Whatever the human suffering, the Church has a greater capacity for healing. It's beautiful! AND God's asked you and I to be part! WE are the Church. YOU are the church. WE are the Church TOGETHER. Every one of you here has an IMPORTANT and ESSENTIAL part to play - a contribution to make - in this beautiful thing called the Church – God's representation in this world.

So, NOW WHAT?

Well, let me tell you a couple things God wants us to do. Number one, write this down, **start living what you have learned.** Start living what you have learned. Live what you have learned. Put it into practice. All the knowledge in the world is worthless unless we practice it. So let's read these three verses: John 13, Ephesians 5, and Philippians 3 together, one right after the other. First, let's read John 13: "*Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*" The blessing doesn't come in knowing the purposes of life. The blessing comes in DOING the purposes of life.

Let's read the next one, Ephesians 5, "*Live life with a due sense of responsibility, not as those who do not know the meaning of life but as those who do.*" Did you know that you are more responsible than you were 42 days ago? You know more. You know what life is all about. And God says you can't go back to the old way of living – the old way of living for

things, living for pleasure, living for fun, living for prestige, living for success. You can't go back to that. Why? Because you know the meaning of life now.

So God says you have a new responsibility. I know I was planned for God's pleasure, so I know I need worship God today. I was formed for God's family, so I need to live in fellowship with some other believers. I was created to be like Christ. I was shaped to serve God. I was made for mission; therefore, I should build my life on these things. I can't go back. As Philippians 3:16 says, look at the next verse, "**Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it!**"

How do you stay on the right track? (1) Get in or STAY in a Small Group; we've given you some ideas for what your next discussion topic may be. (2) Now that you've started a habit of having a time each day with God - a Bible reading time, keep it going. Start with something simple like "Portals of Prayer." In one week start the daily Advent devotions through December – they will be emailed to you or pick up a paper copy today in the lower lobby. Then in January, join us to read through the whole Bible in a year. We will guide you – read through the Bible in 2021.

Keep on the right track. Start living what you learned. Living this way is NORMAL.

Number two, **pass it on**. Pass it on. One of the most fundamental truths about life with Christ is this: You only keep what you give away. (You only keep what you give away.) God doesn't want you to be a reservoir. He wants you to be a funnel. There's almost nothing that God won't do for the person that says, "Use me to bless other people."

As we close, I want to say, I'm so proud of you. I'm proud that you took the risk of getting into *What On Earth Am I Here For?*.

And I want to say this: Let's work together to make what we've experienced NORMAL. **NORMAL!!** God's desire is that we be Baggins and Tooks both. Rejoicing in His love; and taking bold risks to fulfill His purposes in our lives.

Let's keep going together so that

The gospel be preached,

The lost be found,

Believers be equipped,

The poor be served,

The lonely be enfolded into loving fellowship,

And God gets the credit for it all.