

Introduction

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Prepare:

This introduction is about presenting the general concept and definition of purpose.

Pray that through this study you will learn a little bit more about the person God created you to be.

Materials Needed:

Five or six different types of drinking glasses, such as a coffee mug, wine glass, Sippy cup (with lid), and so on.

One clear plastic cup for each participant (this is something they are likely to take with them).

5-10 Post-it notes for each woman

Pens/pencils

A copy of "How Great Is The Love," by Paul Baloche and "Fill My Cup" (traditional hymn) (to play during the time participants are considering and writing what they believe their purpose is)

Immerse:

The closer you become to the person God created you to be, the closer you are to fulfilling His purpose. What joy, what comfort, what peace, what fulfillment for ourselves, in our human nature, to know that we are doing what God has asked us to do.

The phrases "God's purpose" or "living with purpose" are frequently used in today's society and as part of the current Christian lingo. We also hear much similar phraseology like, "living intentionally for Christ" or "being committed to Christ." Books are written about it, sermons preached, and I am sure this is not the only Bible study on

the topic of "purpose." We also commonly hear that God has created you and me to worship and praise him, and that is our purpose. *1

Definition of Purpose:

The word purpose is defined as: The reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists; a goal; a desired or intended result or effect; determination; resolution; to resolve or intend; accomplish or perform; willfully; deliberately. Webster's New College Dictionary, 2001, Houghton Mifflin Company.

I find the first phrase from the dictionary definition most inspiring. Aside from the first phrase, all of the definitions of purpose connote the idea that someone is actively doing something to achieve an outcome or a goal. There is a required active participation in the definition of purpose. Yet the first phrase, while including the active part also says: "the object for which something exists."

This means that the object is created for a particular reason. It takes both parts of the definition, creation and action, working together to complete the definition of "purpose."

In the application to your life, purpose also has two parts. First is your active participation in achieving the purpose God has created you for: what is your role, job, or duty. The second requires no action on your part, but is instead the purpose for which you already exist, the very reason God created you. As you will see as you move through this Bible study, the most fitting definition for the word purpose as used in the

context of this study is the combination of both your active participation and what is already within you, the purpose for which you exist and for which God created you.

Illustration:

Lets start by applying this two-part definition to something we all use everyday: a drinking glass. A glass is utilitarian: it was designed to allow us to drink. Today there are many different types and shapes, some designed to keep things cold, some designed to keep things warm, some designed to look pretty, some with lids to keep little ones from making a mess. Really, I could describe glasses at length, but you get the point. There are many different kinds, but they're all designed or created to serve one singular purpose: to serve as a vessel for humans to drink from. This is the "created" part of the definition. But, in order for the glass to fulfill the second part of the definition of purpose, it needs to be filled and raised to our lips. It needs action on our part. In the same way as glasses, there are many different kinds of people on this earth. While he created all to worship Him, each person was created to worship him or fulfill God's purpose in a different way. God has created you and me with a purpose, but there needs to be action on our part to fulfill that purpose in our life. As you move through this study, remember that we are here to identify the very reason God created us and what action we must take to fulfill our role.

You are created for God's Purpose

How amazing to just ponder for a moment the simple fact that God, this incredible being of whom we are not even worthy of gazing upon, has created you and me with a pre-ordained purpose. He thought enough about you and me to not just throw us out into the world but to create a plan for our lives.

The Psalmist says: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Psalm 139:13-16, NIV. My beloved sister, as you sit here right now, God already has a plan for you, a special way in which you can work with God, and He can work through your life to fulfill His purpose, and you should know that He created you especially with a certain goal, a certain purpose, in mind.

Amazing! You were specially created for God and already have a purpose! God has already completed in you the first part of the definition. The goal of this Bible study is to help you identify and put into practice those things that God has created you to do. That is, the "creation" part of the definition of purpose. *2

Engage:

1. How do you define purpose?
2. What special characteristics or personal traits did God create in you that you believe will help you achieve your purpose?

Engage:

3. What are the things you enjoy doing and how do you think they help you fulfill your purpose?
4. Are there things in your life that you know inhibit you from doing things you know God is calling you to do?

Action Completes Purpose

In the Christian lexicon, it is often said that God has created you and me to worship and praise him. That is our purpose. It is a true and simple statement, but don't mistake this simplicity of God's purpose for your life as being confined to signing a praise song in church on Sundays. There are many different ways that your life praises God. Consider the glasses again. While they all serve to provide humans with a drink, they do so in many different ways. A Sippy cup is used by moms when little ones need a drink, but they are not yet able to drink without spilling. It really serves as a stepping stone and a tool to teach little children how to drink. In the same way, your purpose in worshiping the Lord comes in many different forms. You praise him by completing the "action" part of the definition of purpose.

Let's go back to the glasses for a second. Which works better: coffee in a coffee mug, or coffee in a wine glass? Both will deliver the beverage to the mouth and in a sense fulfill the purpose for which they were created. But really, coffee mugs have certain characteristics that make them perfect for drinking coffee. They are usually made of thick ceramic to keep your coffee hot and they have a handle so you can hold the mug without burning your hands. You can drink coffee in a wine glass and even use the stem to keep from burning your hands. But in truth, only when you drink coffee from a coffee mug is the coffee mug fulfilling its true purpose: it is created for coffee (part one of the definition) and it is being used to deliver coffee to your mouth (part two of the definition).

It is interesting that the contents of the glass are so important to determining whether it fulfills its true purpose. Both the wine glass and the coffee mug fulfill the general purpose of delivering coffee to the drinker, but only one is true to its calling. In the same way each of us, as creations of the Lord Almighty, can serve and praise Him and work diligently towards expanding His kingdom. The real question for each of us is: are we filled with the right "stuff" so that we are pouring His spirit in a way He intended us to. Consider what you are filled with. There is only so much room inside and if you have the wrong "filling" you will not have room to carry out the purpose God has created for you. *3

Prepare to Be Molded

Hear the word of the Lord as he spoke to Jeremiah 18:2-6, NIV. Jeremiah is a prophet of the Old Testament who was called by the Lord to deliver His message to Israel at a time when the nation of Israel was in revolt against the Lord. In this passage, the Lord says to Jeremiah:

"Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working on the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shap-

ing it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hands of a potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.” *4

Be a vessel. Prepare and accept change if that is what the Lord has in store for you. I don’t know a single person who can honestly participate in a Bible Study and not feel conviction if and when they allow themselves to be moldable. God’s purpose will not be thwarted. You can either accept His instruction with an open heart and mind or be reshaped through the fire of life, like He did the nation of Israel. In my experience, it is much easier and much less painful to accept change the Lord is bringing into my life than it is to fight it and have it imposed, or worse, to have the Lord move on and say that He has selected someone else to do His work.

Open your heart and mind to the word of the Lord as He tells you what kind of glass He has already created you to be and what it is you are to pour out to those around you to fulfill His purpose. Let Him fill you up to overflowing as He works through your life to fulfill the purpose He has for you.

Closing:

In closing consider the words of this old hymn we used to sing in church when I was a child:

*Fill my cup, Lord; I lift it up Lord;
Come and quench the thirsting of my soul.
Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more.
Fill my cup, fill it up and make me whole!*

I pray for you, my sister that this Bible study will start you on the path toward becoming “whole.” May it be the catalyst to help you understand both the purpose for which God has created you and the method through which you are to engage with Him to fulfill that purpose. *5

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for this opportunity You have provided to us to discover the purpose You have for each of our lives. Lord, I pray for each lady here today, for each cup, for each vessel, for each heart looking to be filled by Your love, Your presences and Your purpose. Lord, each lady here has taken some time to write down what she thinks Your purpose is for her life. They are open vessels seeking Your guidance in their lives. They are vessels ready to be molded like the prophet Jeremiah saw when he visited the potter’s house. For these ladies, Lord, I pray that You enlighten them, that you give them wisdom and discernment to hear your voice.

Engage:

5. Have each woman take a cup. Write on the Post-It notes the purpose you believe God has for your life at this very moment. It could be one thing, it could be many things, it could be that you are not sure what to write. The goal of this study is to provide a way to make sure that you have the right thing in your cup. Take the cup and place it on your nightstand or in your prayer spot. As you go through this study pray over those things that you have written. At the end of the study, take a look back at your notes to see how much you have grown in the Lord.

Discussion Questions:

How do you decide what to write?

What are you already good at? Is there a characteristic that you feel defines you now? What is it and does it tie in with your purpose.

What are those areas where you feel the Lord is calling you to serve?

For those who have listed items, Lord I pray that You will help them consider whether the things in their glass are supposed to be there. For the things that belong, confirm for them their purpose. Strengthen in them those characteristics that you have already provided to make them excel in those areas. Put your servants around them in the a role that will lift them up and support them in committing to and carrying out your purpose in their lives.

For those who have items listed that do not belong in their cup, Lord, I pray that as when a vessel is created, and it is fired, all impurities are burned off. In the same way, Lord, let this be the opportunity to pass through the fire and remove those things that do no belong in their cups.