

Living Purposefully

Finding God's best for life today

Introduction

It is always easy to settle for less and miss God's best for our life. So it's worth reading again what the Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians Ch 4 v 8 'whatever is true ,whatever is noble, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.'

So that is what we shall be doing in this study. This means having a look at every part of our life, and seeing ourselves through the lenses of God's eyes. It's about dreaming about the future that will be shaped by His hands, not ours. Our pattern is always going to be Jesus, and today we are called to follow Him. Every area of our life can reflect his excellence and purpose. Maybe it's about time for us to move up from mediocrity in our living, and move on from just being good to seeking excellence in what we do, and how we live for the glory of God.

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Study 1.
Living a purposeful spiritual life.

The call throughout the whole of the Scripture from God to his people is 'bring me your best, because I have given you my best.' Sadly this has not always been the case down through history. It is tempting for us to toss God our leftovers, to give Him what is convenient, rather than what is best.

World view

1. What are some of the ways we can be tempted to give our second best when it comes to how we worship and follow God?

In our offerings

In our attentiveness to worship services

In our time

In our surrender

In our service to others

Word view

Read Malachi Ch 1 v 6-14

2. What do you learn about the heart and character of God in this passage?

3. How does God's character connect to the kind of worship and offerings we should bring Him?

4. What do we learn about the attitudes and motives of God's people in the days of Malachi?

5. How do you see these attitudes alive in the Church today?

6. How do you see these attitudes at work in your own life?

Our view

7. What has God done to show His commitment to you?

8. All of us can be tempted to place conditions and limits on our commitment to God. We say 'God I will do anything except?' What are some of the limits we can be tempted to place on our devotion to God?

9. Can you identify a time when you were amazed and overwhelmed by the sheer depth and reality of God's love for you? How did you respond to this growing awareness?

10. What are some of the unique skills, gifts and abilities God has given you?

11. How are you using them for God

In your home?

The church?

Your community?

12. What is one gift or ability that you can identify that you have not offered back to God?

13. What steps can you take to offer this to God and begin a process of discovering how He can use it for His glory?

Study 2

Living a purposeful moral life.

The challenge of living a moral life is always present. It does appear that scoundrels do seem to be successful, those who cheat on their spouses don't always get caught. The other side of the coin is that devoted followers of God experience breakdown, heartache, medical problems. None of us has to look very far to find people who live morally excellent lives but who are struggling with deep sorrow and pain. So are there real benefits in living and leading a moral life? That's our challenge to explore in this study.

World view

1. Tell about a time when you or someone you know tried to do the right thing for God, but things seemed to go wrong. Or tell about a time you watched someone cross all kinds of moral boundaries and seemed to get away with it?

Word View

Read psalm 73

2 In Psalm 73 1-16 the psalmist has a very specific view of life. How would you describe his outlook on each of the following

- a. His own life and condition
- b. the lives of the wicked and their condition
- c. God's activity in the world.

3. In Psalm 73 v 17-28 everything changes. When the psalmist enters the sanctuary of God, the whole world looks different. How would you describe his outlook on each of the following in the second half of the psalm?

- a. His own life and condition?
- b. The lives of the wicked and their condition?
- c. God's activity in the world?

4. We all know of people who have tried to walk on the slippery stones of moral compromise and have gotten away with it for a time. But eventually their foot slipped and they crashed. Can you offer an example of such a situation, maybe from current events, and then reflect on the cost of their crash.

Our view

5. As sinful people we are all tempted to live with moral compromise. In His grace, God give us warning signs, can you identify any?

6.If you are willing to be vulnerable, what is an area of your life right now where you are tempted to walk on slippery stones?

7. How does the hope of heaven and the anticipation of eternal intimacy with God help us to see to live morally excellent lives?

Study 3

Living a purposeful relational life

The Scripture simply tells us 'They met together' Acts Ch 2 v 46. They related with self-giving love towards each other. Here were people who taught and modelled the vision of authentic community. It was all about relational connectedness. It wasn't perfect but what we do get is a beautiful glimpse of people meeting in both public settings and private homes. They needed both kinds of experiences, and so do we.

The purpose of this session is to look at how we grow in our relational lives in how we grow in small clusters with other believers.

World view

1. Most of us can think of people who come to Church like the lady who backed away from her vicar as he came to share the peace with her during communion ' I come to church to worship God, not to be friendly.' Such people go home without any real connectedness. What do they miss out on when they settle for this kind of church experience?

2. What do we gain when we deeply engage with other believers in authentic Christian community?

Word view

Read Acts Ch 2 v 42-47 1 John 4 v11-12 and James Ch 5 v 13-16

3. What were some of the practices that marked the life of the first century church, and how do you see these alive or missing in the church today?

4. What were some of the attitudes that marked the life of the first century church, and how do you see these alive or missing in the church today?

5. How have you found a small group setting to be a natural place to express and receive love and affirmation?

6. How can a small group help to create space for expressing love and affirmation to one another?

Our view

7. How can the thoughts and insights of others help to shape and deepen personal life application of Scripture?

8. How has small group participation helped to raise the bar of accountability in your life?

9. What do you think are the potential risks of sharing your struggles in a small group setting?

10. What do you think are the values and benefits of becoming a group that can humbly confess areas of struggle?

Study 4

Living a purposeful financial life

Several years ago I had the hubcaps from my car stolen. I had parked the car in a multi-story car park in south London, when I came back all four hubcaps had been taken. Someone had taken what was mine. I found myself thinking 'Who did this?' Who is so brazenly self-centred that they could invade my life like this? If you have ever had something taken from you, then you will know the vast array of feelings that come with such an experience.

World view

1. If you have had something taken from you, how were you impacted, how did it make you feel?

Word view

Read Malachi Ch 1 v 6-12 and Proverbs 3 v 9-10

2. How does God feel about the behaviour of His people in light of what you read in Malachi Ch 3?

3. What is God calling His people to do in the above passages?

4. What does God say will happen if His people follow His call to live with generosity?

5. Why do you think God calls us to give our first 10 % back to Him?

6. How does a person's pattern of giving reflect the condition of their heart?

7. What specific growth steps will help us expand our heart so that giving a tithe and offerings [gifts above the first 10%] is a natural response of love?

Our view

- 8.If a person has a heart for God and wants to give Him the tithe, and even offerings, but never does a serious ' gut-check'. What might happen?
9. How might serious personal evaluation of our financial lives bring our hearts and actions into sync and deepen our faith?
10. Take five minutes [or less] and just reflect on the three bullet points below
- a. Do an initial gut-check- think through your income over the last 3 months, and the think about what you have given to God's work in the same period, be as honest with yourself as you can
 - b. Reflect on your heart- over the same period have you been giving joyfully, generously?
 - c. Spend a moment in silent prayer- if there is no problem with a. and b. praise God, if there is a struggle with a. and b. ask God for strength
11. What are some of the financial situations that can shake our faith and cause us to become fearful rather than faithful?
- 12.What can help you maintain a faithful and generous heart even in hard times?

Study 5

Living a purposeful directional life.

We all face critical crossroads in our life, and sadly when we get to such points we often forget to involve God in the decisions we make. We all of us need a framework in which to take and assess reliable and needed information. We need to realise that God wants to share with us His wisdom and insight; we just need to avail ourselves of what God offers us. God takes delight in coming along us at every critical crossroads to help us take the right direction.

World View

1. Can you tell about a time you had to make a decision and failed to ask God for wisdom and direction. How did things turn out?
2. Can you identify a time when you really slowed down and looked to God for his direction. What means did God use to direct you?

Word view

Read James Ch 1 v 5-8 Psalm 119v 105 Romans Ch 8 v 14 Proverbs Ch 11 v14 Colossians Ch 4 v3

3. According to these passages, what are some of the ways that God gives direction to His children?
4. How have you experienced one of these direction-giving encounters with God?
5. Why do you think that God is concerned that we with confident faith in Him and not place our faith in 'the wisdom of the world'?
6. Through your years as a follower of Jesus, what has strengthened your faith in His ability to guide you?

Our view

7. Describe a time when the simple, clear teaching of the Bible gave you the direction you needed to press forward and follow God's will for your life.

8. How can study of God's written Word prepare you for most situations you will face in your life?

9. What are some practical ways that we can develop a pattern of Bible study to help us gain heavenly wisdom and direction in our lives?

10. If you can tell about a time you felt God's prompting and the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit directing you. How did you respond to the leading?

11. How do you think that your group could become a community of wisdom givers that could offer guidance?

Study 6. Living a purposeful eternal life

In Old Testament times the metaphor of wild flowers was commonly used to paint a picture of the brevity and frailty of life. So for example Psalm 103 v15-16 and Job Ch 14 v 1-2. The flowers that grew in the Middle East became a picture of life. Death often comes suddenly and unexpectedly. There is a frailty to our existence. We can be like wildflowers that spring up and adorn the desert, but before you know this life is over.

World view

1.If you can speak about a time when you were struck by the frailty and brevity of life. How did this moment of insight impact the way you view eternity?

Word view

Read Ephesians Ch 2 v 8-9 and Titus Ch 3 v4-7

2.How do these passages correct the errant human tendency there is believe that we have to earn our forgiveness?

Read John Ch 14 v6 Acts 4 v11-12 Romans 10 v9-10 and John 1 v 12-13

3. How does a sinful person find cleansing from sin and gain the assurance that heaven will be their home?

4. Describe the first time that it sank into you that salvation is not based on your good works or personal merits, but on the amazing grace of a loving God.

5. Forgiveness and heaven are undeserved gifts given to us from the hands of a loving God. How does this truth impact you if the following areas

How you worship God

How you share the love of God with others

How you respond when you stumble and fall into sin

How you view people who are living neck-deep in sin

Other aspects of your life and faith

Our view

6. Tell about when you first believed in Jesus, accepted His forgiveness, and became part of God's family

7. The message of God's love and grace is amazing. The hope of heaven is also amazing. What are some of the ways we can communicate this good news to friends and family members who have not yet embraced Jesus?

Read 1 Corinthians Ch 15 v 50-57: Revelation 7 v 15-17: Revelation 21 v 18-22:5

8. When you think about heaven, what excites you most about going there when life ends?

9. How does the hope of heaven inspire your life today?