IT’S NOT ABOUT ME

GETTING OUT OF YOUR OWN WAY

2/5/17

“For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible.. everything got started in him and finds its purpose in Him.” (Col. 1:16 MSG)

Introduction

We are beginning today, an exciting 40 day spiritual growth journey called, “40 days of purpose-What on earth am I here for?” It is all about answering this most important question “What has God put me on the earth to do?” How can I best invest the remaining years of my life so that not a single day is wasted, so that as it was said of David it can be said of me, He served God’s purpose in his generation and died.”

I love what Rick Warren says on the first video: If you live to be 70 years old, you will live 25,550 days. Don’t you think it’s worth just 40 of those days to find out what you’re suppose to do with the rest of them?

Last week we laid out a couple of foundational propositions:

A.That our lives were actually planned. We are not a freak accident of nature, a wisp of the wind that we were actually formed and made by our Creator with an actual purpose and plan that He wants to steer our life towards. Whether we live in his perfect plan or simply in a secondary permitted plan is up to us, whether we’re willing to position ourselves according to what He has revealed to us in the Bible to discover, know, and fulfill it.

1.Part of this campaign as we’ve said is “reinforced learning” mind, hands, ears, mouth.. so one part of it is memorizing Scripture.. Here is our first memory verse.

Isaiah 44:2 “I am your Creator, you were in my care even before you were born.” Let’s repeat that.

Psalms 139:16 (TLB) says

You (God) saw me before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book.”

You were not an accident, no matter what your parents told you, there are “unplanned pregnancies but there are no unplanned, unpurposed lives.”

The ultimate reason He made you was actually just to love you. In fact the first and greatest purpose of your life is to learn how to let God love you.

2.That plan is an absolutely good plan, not without trouble and pain, but a plan of beauty and hope… A plan in which He has said:

a.He has gifted you to do something exceptionally good and beautiful in the world, something He wants to be the source of and the director of so that what is accomplished through you is something bigger than you could dream of or imagine, because He says in Eph. 3:20 “He is able to do abundantly beyond you could even ask or think by His power that works in you.” GOD HAS MEGA PLANS FOR YOUR LIFE!

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.” (Eph. 2:10)… Prepared before the foundation of the world.

b.These plans are plans that no earthly tragedies, no demon of Hell, calamity of nature, sins, mistakes.. no aweful things we have done or people have done to us can cancel or defeat if we choose to make the choices to position ourselves to live according to His purposes.

“God is able to work all things together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purposes.” (Rom. 8:28)

We see this in Joseph who was betrayed but went from a prison to a palace because he chose to seek God’s dream.

The Apostle Paul who went from Terrorist to Apostle because he accepted God’s calling even after so many years of misdirection. I love the verse in I Tim.

“By calling me into his service, Jesus has judged me trustworthy, even though I use to be a blasphemer and a persecuter and contemptuous mercy, was shown me, because while I lacked faith I acted in ignorance.”

To really believe this is to have a key that can transform the way you live and make you unstoppable.

I think of the story of Chuck Colson, he was the White house advisor to President Nixon, as the result of the Watergate scandal he went from the white house to the prison house. He blew it, he crashed his life seemed doom. But he actually found Christ and found his purpose there in prison and went on to start a ministry called prison fellowship in over 150 countries of the world… still today are finding hope and God’s love, prisons are being reformed, because Chuck found and fulfilled God’s purpose.

Another hero of mind is Nick Vicijic born with no arms or legs. He tells the story of how he wanted to commit suicide and had no reason to live. One day he heard the story from John 9 where the disciples asked Jesus why a man had been born blind and whether as it was commonly believed in those days because his parents had sinned or because he was a sinner. Jesus said, “No, it is so that the works of God might be revealed.” Nick came to the revelation God had a purpose for him being born the way he was born, his testimony as the result has been broadcast he’s gone all over the world with a message of such joy and hope to all who’ve suffered because of physical disabilities, he’s married, he even surfs, he has more joy and humor and impact than almost anybody I knew just because he choose to position himself to know and fulfill God’s purpose.

It doesn’t mean that God causes evil things.. those happen because of the fallen world created by man’s choices and the devil’s rule on this planet. But through our faith God promises to unleash His sovereign GPS system.. to take what was meant for evil and “reroute” it for good!

B.The other thing we mentioned last week, is just that such a key part of discovering this purpose is our willingness to intentionally connect ourselves in relationships with people who are seeking to know God’s purpose for their life. You see the Bible refers to us as Christians as members of a body.

Romans 14:17

“None of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.”  
Ephesians 4:4

We are all one body, we have one spirit, called to the same glorious future.

If you think of it like an eye. How does an eye find its purpose? By being connected to the eye socket. How does a finger finds it’s purpose. So many Christians are seeking a “lone ranger” plan of discipleship, but it isn’t the way God planned for it. We say, God show me my dream, He says go find your team.. fit in, be part, add value to others on the same journey.

Today, we are doing everything we know to do to help everyone of you find a group to take this journey with for just 40 days, 6 weeks. One thing I know is that some of us have been burned or we’ve tried groups and they were boring or annoying, maybe someone was rude made you feel awkward. Even all of that is part of God’s plan. The church isn’t heaven, it could best be described as a laboratory of love, where you learn the most important purpose of your life which is LOVE. You don’t learn that with perfect people, you learn it by going beyond your comfort zone with people. Some of God’s people are like soothing oil and some are like sand paper. You need both to grow and fulfill God’s purpose. Notice 5 ways you can be in a group this week

1.Meet a host and small group pastor have snacks in the playground

2.Look at the list there or online and show up

3.Sign up for one at the websight

4.Email and ask for a suggestion as to which one to go to

5.Start your own

II.The point of today’s message is simple. The starting point of finding/postioning yourself to discover God’s purpose is to really grasp the significance of the fact that we were created by God for God. We must discover this incredible truth Life is all about God it’s not about ME/YOU.

We were made and designed by God to be His instrument to be famous but to make Jesus famous in the world. Before we can find God’s purpose and the incredible plan He wants to carry out in our life, we have to learn to get out of our own way.

Col. 1:16 MSG)

“For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible… everything got started in him and finds its purpose in Him.”  
Eph.1:11-12MSG  
“It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for.. part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

A.When I read that verse I have thought of what it was like in 1543 when a scientist named Capernicus proved to the world of his day, that unlike what had always been believed, the sun and universe didn’t revolve around the earth, the earth revolved around the sun. He must have pointed to the sun and said, “Hey earth people, that’s the center.” Perhaps he would have pointed to the moon and said that’s like us we are meant to be “sun reflectors.” That’s our purpose to the degree we do that our life will be full. The more our ego gets out of the way, the God fills our life in every way.

1.Sense Adam, this has been humankinds greatest struggle we want to be god and let God and others be our servants. We wanted to be like the proverbial pot that tells the potter what we are going to be made for. We want to be like the humorous take I heard on the donkey who Jesus rode into Jerusalem when the crowds praised and threw the palm branches at his feet. He was convinced they were all cheering for him, he could never be ridden again, because he was convinced he was the star, he could never accept that he was just the mule, it was the fact he carried and served Jesus that made his life significant.

There is the tendency for us all to think in our mind of a world that exists for us, we are suppose to have a spouse and children that make us happy, the weather and traffic are suppose to fit our preference, people are to realize that we are a pretty big deal, that it’s fine to point other’s faults but they should understand our intentions, and the whole world should go out of its way to make me feel good-don’t those drivers out there no, that it’s all about me.

This kind of thinking sets us in direct opposition to God’s purposes for our life all based on one thing… we exist like Ambassadors to the king to draw attention to Him, to promote the King’s agenda, to elevate His name, to represent His interests, to fight for His agenda, to give Him glory… To the degree God’s glory, focus get’s bigger in our life we have His power, His joy, His peace, His purpose, and His plan working in our life. To the degree we get big in our life we lose all of that, life becomes confusing, stressful, and unfulfilling.

I love this letter that was written to Rick Warren after a lady went through this same campaign:

“Pastor Rick, my life was changed on the first day of 40 days of purpose, with the first sentence of the book. The book begins ‘Its not about you.’ I can’t tell you how much those four words have altered my outlook on life. During 40 days my eyes have been opened to see how much of the emotional pain and problems in relationships have been caused by ignoring this basic truth. Since I’ve learned, it I’ve noticed that whenever I act like it is all about me, I lose my happiness. I start worrying about problems and I get angry and resentful when people like my husband let me down. I feel insecure when I’m criticized, jealous when I am overlooked and guilty when I think about my shortcomings. I also become impatient with my kids and stubborn when I don’t get my way. The root of all these negative emotions has been my focus on me. For the last five weeks, “I’ve repeated, ‘It is not about me. It is all about God’ What a difference this has made, I am a happier person, a better mom, and a better wife.”

The more my attention is on me the more stress I have because:

1.I have more expectations of life that are not God’s plans for my life. I set my life up for continual disillusionment and disappointment.

2.If it’s all about me, it’s all up to me… I tend to do things in my strength

I find even in ministry I can get uptight about whether I’m going to be able to do a good enough job, but when It’s all about Him, I have a peace that He’s at work and is going to be the Author and Finisher of things.

\*Like an art museum guide once said, my job is to lead people to the painting, answer any questions the best I can, and then get out of the way. Especially with Jesus… this isn’t about our church and talent, it’s about God’s power, love, and ability, that we get to point to

3..The less I recognize the opportunities and plans that God has for my life to make an eternal difference for His glory.

If it’s all about me, I’m going to look at my gifts, talents, and assets and think mainly about how they can make me more successful or wealthier…

If it’s all about God, suddenly I’m looking at those same things and asking, “How could you use these things to make Jesus more famous, and bring more of Father’s lost children back home?”

The more being a Dad is all about Jesus, the more I will see God’s purpose for fatherhood, the more going to work is all about Jesus, the more I will see the purposes of God at work.

III.How can we make it all about Jesus

A.Surrender our pride

Proverbs 16:18-19

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Pride has been defined as “an unholy PREOCCUPATION with self that causes to put our interests above God’s and live for self validation instead of contentment with God’s validation.”

Notice the issue is preoccupation. It is ok to be occupied with things you are interested in, making a living, succeeding, accomplishing, even being aware of what other people are thinking of you, or treating you. Pride is when we are preoccupied with us.

C.S. Lewis says the problem with pride is that everyone else knows it’s a problem you have before you know you have it

At the root of it is a feeling of esteem or importance you get by a false and untrue picture of your importance. Something that you create by holding to an image of yourself that you try to portray and get others to believe in that is not true. It is like those airbrushed glamour shots, where you present how you want to look, and cover up all of the messy parts. A proud person wears a mask, is out to create an inflated image of their own importance.. or as the people of Babel, out to make a name for themselves. When it is operating it sabatoges the work that God wants to do through us in so many ways making us self absorbed, hypocritical, and insecure.

A proud person sees everything every person every circumstance and every event in light of who they are and their interests, they are “totally full of themselves.” If they look at graduation picture the only person they look at is them. If they go to church, it’s all about… what did I get out of that, how did I feel.

I like Bryan Chappel who said in a sermon on pride he was going to entitle it: “You’re so vain, you probably thought this sermon was all about you.”

I think one way I could kind of expose pride is to share different examples of how I’ve had to confess the sin of pride in my life… from my journal

1.Forgive me for ways I’ve been into image management Lord, I’ve exaggerated stories to make me look better than I am, I’ve name dropped, I’ve forced my opinion in to have the last word and try to make sure my ideas dominated a conversation, I’ve been obsessed with winning at times and wanting to compare myself and prove that I was better than others, I’ve spent too much time worrying and getting upset about what people were thinking about me, I’ve struggled to apologize as quickly as I should’ve and have been to concerned about setting the record straight.

I’ve worried more about my performance than I have about what people thought of God sometimes, I’ve fumed for hours over people’s criticism, and thought of all kinds of ways to judge them in my mind. I’ve been way to sensitive to people’s insults. I’ve gotten upset about doing good things and other people haven’t noticed. I’ve felt so tempted to “power up” on other drivers who have cut me off with no excuse, who didn’t recognize it was God’s ordained plan for me to be the king of the road. I’ve held on to hurt feelings way too long in my marriage because I was insisting in my mind on the kind of apology that I thought was fitting before I gave the grace to move on.

What all of that does is sabatoge, it gets in the way. O the people in the Bible and history could’ve had such amazing lives fulfilling their purpose if they hadn’t let ego edge God out. I think of Saul, who David would’ve made the greatest king in history but his ego couldn’t handle the ladies singing about David killing more enemies than him. Hezekiah who would’ve finished well but he couldn’t admit that he made a mistake.

Reminds me of the story of the frog who was trying to figure out how to get over the river. He had a brilliant idea, he would ask two birds if they would take a stick and he would hold on by his teeth as they flew him over the river. They did and it was working brilliantly until half way over the river, some ducks looked up and one shouted, Whose brilliant idea was it to carry a frog over a river that way… the frog couldn’t stand it and said it was miiiiiiiiiine

The Bible says there is only one thing to do with pride… take it to the cross in confession and surrender each day until it loses it’s grip. It’s all based on the realization that every time my pride gets bigger, God and His ability to fulfill His purpose in my life gets smaller, and every time pride gets smaller, God and His purpose gets bigger in my life.

B.Embrace humility… Humility is simply being set free to become the person God has made you to be, because you make the glorious decision to let Jesus be the star, the Hero, the focus, the Glory of your life and choose to accept the identity that comes not from people or the world but from who God says you are.

The truth is we can get rid of pride by trying to not be proud, but only be replacing pride by looking to a different place to satisfy the craving for significance that is in our heart. A craving that ultimately can’t be fulfilled by any degree of success of affirmation from man. But only can be fulfilled by God as we make Him the source and the center of our identity.

Humility is simply the freedom that comes when you choose to believe who God says you are and choose to accept a “righteousness, resume, reputation validation of yourself simply on the basis of God’s assessment of you, in a way that allows you to redirect the attention, focus, and efforts of your life off of you and on to making Jesus famous and bringing God glory.

A humble person doesn’t think less of themselves they just think about themselves less, because they are completely comfortable in their own skin. Because they have come to embrace the full truth about themselves:

1.They are more broken and sinful than they themselves even know. But they are more loved, cherished, adored and valued by God than they could ever realize. They have nothing to prove, nothing to defend to make themselves look great, because they rest completely in what Jesus did to affirm, validate, and defend who they are when He died for them. Declaring them forgiven, God’s precious child, eternally wanted, favored, loved and defended by the only One in the whole universe who’s opinion ultimately matters.

2.In so doing they have surrendered the spotlight of their life to forever being on Jesus, His greatness, and glory. They actually find their life mysteriously more and more fulfilled everytime they seek to make Jesus more famous. Somehow they have discovered the less life is about them and the more life is about God, the more confident, assured, satisfied, and liberated. Perhaps one of the greatest realizations of freedom that ever comes then when we are able:

In a definition of humility by Thomas Merton: “To be precisely the person you are before God, without the need to airbrush, validate, or defend yourself. He said the moment you become that person you will know that you are not like anyone else in the whole universe.

Broken but blessed, imperfect but precious, limited but fully competent to accomplish exactly the mission God put you on the earth to do.

In that moment, you will be able to wear your skin and personality the way you wear a well worn perfectly fitting shoe, comfortable enjoyable and without hardly even noticing you are there.

What a joy then comes as you are free:

-to apologize easily

-to be overlooked and not offended

-to laugh at yourself and the stupid things you do

-to not care about people’s opinions and judgements of you

-to be truly thrilled and not envious of other people’s success

-to let others have their way without it being a threat to you

-to do good even if no one notices

-to lose or win without it changing your mood

-to enjoy being you and at ease with how you are perceived

-to think continuously of how to glorify God and add value to other people.

Closing

I wonder if you have fully come to the place of acknowledging Jesus Christ as the center of your life and universe. If you have come to a place of surrendering the throne, the need to be first.

I wonder if you’d be willing today to decide that you don’t want the rest of your life to be about you, but about doing everything you can to make Jesus more famous, for Him to receive more glory and honor than anything and everyone in your life.

I want you to know that the moment Jesus is the center of your orbit the pieces of your life will begin to fall in place and come to order. Like the boy who put the puzzle of Jesus together. He said, when I put Jesus at the center all of the pieces of the puzzle just came together.