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**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

When You Don't Believe God Has a Purpose for You.

Monday, July 31, 2017.

Have you ever seen a movie with a twist ending? Typically, this is a plot change that leaves the audience with their jaws on the floor trying to quickly put together all of the pieces of the film that point to this twist. What's even more fun is watching a movie in which you already know the twist ending. Good directors are extremely intentional about each scene so that when you do eventually rewatch their film, you can see how the plot twist makes complete sense. The way the characters interact, the language they use, and the setting in which each scene takes place all point to that plot twist.

When you rewatch the movie, you notice all of these specific details, which makes the movie even more incredible. When we *know* what the twist is before the start of the movie, we watch the movie with an entirely different posture. Similar to how we might watch an old sporting event knowing the outcome ahead of time, which makes each play more vital to the game.

Eric Williams, Senior Director of Communications, spoke about this idea this past weekend. He then connected it to who God is and argued that when we realize who God is, it changes everything about our lives. Specifically, he talked about God's intentionality. More so than even the best directors, God is very intentional with everything in his production - human history. Everything from the fact that you exist, to the country and time in which you live, the parents to whom you were born, the job you hold, etc., was all - in a sense - designed by God.

This week, we are going to really look at what God's intentionality means for our lives. Today, however, we are going to focus on one thing, which is that once we become followers of Christ, we participate in God's intentionality. After we give our lives to Jesus, we live God-intentioned lives and thus experience the joy he has for us.

Our passage for today comes from 1 Corinthians 12:2, in which Paul writes, "You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols."

It's a short passage, yes, but one packed with meaning for us.

"When you were still pagans..."

Here, Paul is referring to our lives before following Jesus. All of us - no matter our background - were pagans before salvation in Christ. We were pagans in the sense that we worshiped *anything* other than God.

Next, he writes, “you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols.”

This is not the life God wants for us. He does not want us to be "led astray" or to worship false gods. But, that's the life we had led before we were following Jesus. This life is not the life God *intends* for us. Instead, God wants us to live lives that are in step with his well-intentioned, perfect plan. When we don't, we are simply being “led astray” and “swept along” with the rest of the world.

Instead, God has a plan. He always has and always will. It doesn't mean, however, that we are always living in-step with his plan. Indeed, before we were followers of Christ, we weren't living in God's plan.

Now that we are Christ-followers, we can choose daily to realize that God is intentional, and **discover that we have a unique purpose** in his plan.

Each day, we can choose to live out that unique purpose - God's intention - or not. This is an act of submission of our will to his and accomplished only by the power of the Holy Spirit. With God's help, we can live how he intended us to live. It just takes a yielding to the Holy Spirit and a willingness to live out the unique purpose he's given us.

What was your life like before walking with Christ?

In what ways are you living out your unique purpose today?

In what areas do you struggle to live a life surrendered to God's plan?

What can you do today to help you live out God's plan for your life?

Prayer:

God, thank you so much for your love, your mercy, and your plan for my life. I cannot follow you without your help. I ask that you would guide me and lead me to live a life that is in-step with your calling - your intention. I know that with the power of the Holy Spirit, this is possible. I ask all this in his power and by the name of Jesus, Amen.

This post was written by Andy Rectenwald, the Director of the LivingItOut Bible Study.

What to Do When You're Jealous of Other People's Spiritual Gifts.

Tuesday, August 1, 2017

I have a good friend who felt called to go to an internship in New Orleans. Part of what she does there is share the Good News of Jesus Christ to non-Christians on Bourbon Street, of all places. She is a great person for this because she is skilled at seeking opportunities to build relationships with non-Christians and knowing how to present the gospel in a way that strangers will best receive it in their current stage of life.

My friend has the gift of evangelism. I, however, do not. I have always marveled at her skill as she shared stories about her encounters. I'm a natural introvert. I am good at sharing the gospel with those I know well, but not as much with strangers. I'm not skilled at sparking up conversations with new people, let alone telling them about something as important as salvation. It used to make me feel like I lacked something in my Christian walk. God commands all of us to share the Good News, just as he tells us to have faith, give of our resources, and show others mercy, for instance. All of these are examples of spiritual gifts. God does, many times, push for us to work outside our comfort zone, and while we each should strive to excel in these areas, we should do so knowing that for some it comes easier, and that area is where God uses them the best. Some of my gifts are teaching, encouragement, and discernment. God may not call me to share the gospel on Bourbon Street as he does my friend, but he has a purpose for me here.

God, in his infinite creativity and wisdom, has given us unique gifts. He knows where you will do your best work for his kingdom because this is where he has gifted you. Knowing we were intentionally given spiritual gifts from God, we can be encouraged to live out God's unique purpose for our lives.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

⁴There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. ⁶God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

God didn't make us carbon copies of one another. He made us unique in his image. Differing gifts are evidence that God works differently through all of us. Our spiritual gifts may be different, but they are with the same goal and from the same God.

Have you ever felt you were pursuing something that did not line up with your God-given gifts? Was it difficult for you to navigate and acclimate?

Where are your gifts being utilized right now? Where might they be used?
Have you ever felt discouraged, or even envious of others' gifts?

How can you change your mindset and become motivated to use your skillset?

Prayer:

*Dear God, thank you for the gifts you have given me. It is such a beautiful thing that you have given us unique gifts, thinking of where you plan to use us for the good of your kingdom. Thank you for the purpose that this gives us. While I know you will pull me out of my comfort zone at times, please teach me to focus on and utilize the gifts you have given me for your glory.
Amen.*

This post was written by Ashlee Grosjean, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Baseball and...Spiritual Gifts?

Wednesday, August 2, 2017

My family loves sports, but particularly baseball and softball. From the Cleveland Indians to the Toledo Mud Hens to the Southview Cougars, we love to play, watch, cheer on, coach, and support our teams! As a girl growing up, I begged my father for a glove when a little league field was built at the end of our street. Despite my pleadings, his response was that I was a girl and didn't need one. What's funny is that many years later, he loved watching his grandson and granddaughters play high school ball! If you think about it, many different roles, skills, and people are needed to put on a baseball or softball game. For example, at the professional level, you need players, coaches, assistant coaches, athletic trainers, uniforms, equipment suppliers and manufacturers, food and beverage vendors, managers, owners, communications staff, sports reporters, travel and transportation organizers, hotels and their staffs, umpires, and of course the fans! All of these roles are important. Many require special abilities, skills, and gifts, and without even one, the whole experience would suffer!

Think of a baseball game as an analogy of spiritual gifts.

Theologian W.R.F. Browning defines a spiritual gift as “an endowment which may be given by the Holy Spirit,” and “supernatural graces which individual Christians need to fulfill the mission of the Church.”

To serve others in our church, in our community, and beyond, we need to know and understand our spiritual gifts. A spiritual gifts test can be found at www.cedarcreek.tv/serve/spiritualgifts. If you haven't taken it yet, you should prayerfully consider it. Over the past several years, I've taken the test several times, and each time, I have become more aware of the strengths and weaknesses accompanying my gifts! The reason for understanding your intentional gifts is to know your potential for helping others.

As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and Christians everywhere in **1 Corinthians 12:7-11**:

⁷A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. ⁹The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. ¹⁰He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the spiritual gifts you have bestowed upon me. Help me to know them and understand my potential for using them to serve others. Amen.

This post was written by Pam Haynam, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

What We Can Learn About Spiritual Gifts from the Military.

Thursday, August 3, 2017

Feet and knees together, eyes on the horizon, feet and knees together, eyes on the horizon, feet and knees to... 'THUD'... hit the ground at 17mph, conduct a parachute landing fall, pull the canopy release assembly before getting dragged, open my m1950 weapons case, put my rifle into operation, check my surroundings, pack up my parachute, secure my equipment, ruck up and move out to the assembly point, gather my platoon and secure our objective.

As part of the 82nd Airborne Division, this was my personal, and quite uncomfortable perspective on multiple "Joint Operations Access Exercise" where my unit along with thousands of other paratroopers and Air Force personnel trained to execute the 82nd Airborne's mission with flawless precision. The mission of the 82nd Airborne Division is to, within 18 hours of notification, strategically deploy, conduct forcible entry parachute assault, and secure key objectives for follow-on military operations in support of U.S. national interests.

Each training exercise takes thousands of well-trained and focused service men and women across multiple branches of the military, all intentionally playing their part, to result in a successful operation. Some people have to fly the planes, some people have to jump out of the planes, some have to push equipment out of planes, and all are in differing levels of authority. If just one person fails to execute their assigned task, the ramifications can significantly affect the mission for thousands of others.

Seeing such a massive operation in action reminds me how intentional the military is with each job, position, and soldier. When we read Paul's description of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12, as we did last weekend, we see how intentional God is with every person that is a follower of Christ. My experience in the 82nd Airborne is merely a minuscule representation of what God has done on a global and eternal scale with his people.

As we saw last weekend, Paul uses the imagery of a body in 1 Corinthians 12 to describe how every Christian as a unique role and purpose in their life.

1 Corinthians 12:12-21 says:

¹²The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

¹⁴Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. ¹⁵If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

¹⁸But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. ¹⁹How strange a body would be if it had only one part! ²⁰Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. ²¹The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”

Paul is reminding us that each part of the body is intentionally placed to fulfill its purpose. You are where you are with the gifts you have been given because God wanted it to be that way! Most of us have heard or read this passage before, and nobody really claims to be confused by it. Yet, we often fail to put the truths of this passage into practice in our individual life.

If the military can put this idea of each person intentionally purposed for a role and task into practice to accomplish worldly pursuits, how much more important is it that the church, the followers of Christ, put this into practice when there are *eternal* implications at stake.

What do we do in light of the truth that God has intentionally given us a purpose?

First, we should look at life through a different lens. Begin to consider where you have been placed, your position, as part of your purpose. The school you go to, the neighborhood you live in, the job you have, the family you live with, the circumstances you find yourself in, you are there for a reason.

Second, don't complain! Instead of complaining, embrace your purpose. No matter where you are, you are there to make Jesus known, to let others know they matter to God, and to make an eternally positive and lasting impact.

Your mission is to embrace your position so you can fulfill your purpose; the body of Christ requires it.

Do you view where you are in life as God's intentional purpose for you?

Have you been complaining about where God has placed you?

How can you better embrace your purpose of affecting the sphere of influence that God has given you?

Dear God,

You are bigger than I can fathom. You are all knowing and all powerful. You know me better than I know myself. In your ultimate wisdom, you have created me with a purpose. You have placed me where I am at in life, with the gifts you have given me, for a reason. Forgive me for complaining about the way you have created me or desiring something different. Help me embrace the purpose you have given me now and every day going forward. You are good. Amen.

This post was written by Alex Woody, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

What Are You Passionate About?

Friday, August 4, 2017.

I love to sing. Anyone who knows me well knows that I am an encyclopedia of song lyrics, and I love to sing them all. I used to be in a band, and I loved it. The energy, the feeling of being in front of a crowd, and the chance to just belt it out was such a rush. I am passionate about music - all kinds, from [classical](#) to [classic rock](#) to [Christian Hip Hop](#). I used to dream about playing music for a living, but I really knew I wasn't *that* good. Then after I became a Christian, I used to dream about being in the CedarCreek band, but by then I had trashed my voice. I knew I wasn't good enough for that either. Coming to that realization was hard and humbling.

What I could do, though, was turn people onto music they may have never heard before and encourage people with songs. I could also help program music, first for Life Support, then Celebrate Recovery. I found other ways to use my passion for a purpose, even if it wasn't the grandiose dreams I had had initially. I feel that I have helped a lot of people through music.

Often we feel as if our life is going to have this big, audacious purpose, and then we are disappointed when it doesn't turn out that way. But, as we have seen throughout this week, God has created us all uniquely and for a purpose that suits *him*, if maybe not us. The key is to really understand that his ways are so much better than ours (Isaiah 55:8) and to be content (Philippians 4:11) with the amazing gifts that God has given us.

What I found out through doing the spiritual gifts assessment is that I'm a good leader and administrator. That has helped me do better with my business. I also have the gift of help and mercy, which has helped me in the leadership ministry that I'm involved in as a mentor and leader. I am about to start a new job, and I'm very excited to use all the things that I have learned through these experiences in my new position. I may not be rocking out on stage, but I can still rock out in my car, or the shower, or with anything that I do for that matter, knowing that God has equipped me for my unique performance in this crazy show called life.

We make so much of celebrities and glamorize so many things in this world that really aren't important at all. I want to be a great mom and a great daughter, a best friend, and a good mentor and boss. I want to do the things that God has positioned me for as well as I can. If I am passionate about this stuff, I will live a good life and one day hear my Lord say to me, "Well done, my good and faithful servant!" (Luke 19:17)

1 Corinthians 12:22-31a

²²In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. ²³And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, ²⁴while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. ²⁵This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

²⁷All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. ²⁸Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church:

***first are apostles,
second are prophets,
third are teachers,
then those who do miracles,
those who have the gift of healing,
those who can help others,
those who have the gift of leadership,
those who speak in unknown languages.***

²⁹Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? ³⁰Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! ³¹So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts.

Have you taken the Spiritual gifts assessment yet? What are your top 5 gifts?

How can you use those gifts in your current circumstances to fulfill God's purpose for your life?

For further help finding God's purpose for your life, I highly recommend "Chazown" by Craig Groeschel. A fun, free website to go along with the book is <http://legacy.chazown.com/>. You may find that you don't even really need the book!

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving me such amazing gifts. Help me to recognize them and to be content with them. Help me to find ways in my everyday life to use them to bring honor and glory to you. Amen.

This post was written by Kelda Strasbourg, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.