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FINDING OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE (John 1:19-34)

Billions of people in our world mindlessly move through the motions of life's existence with little or no purpose. Working, eating, sleeping, partying, parenting, shopping, playing, watching television and other activities are done every day just to be duplicated the next day and the day after that. But why are we really here? What's the purpose to life?

Henry David Thoreau said, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them." The Bible says this doesn't have to be and holds the answer to the purpose of life. The example of John the Baptist in this study's text shows a man who knew why he was on the planet.

WE MUST KNOW WHO WE ARE NOT

John 1:19-22 - This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

John the Baptist acknowledged an important thing here. He wasn't the Messiah, even though he was teaching repentance and baptizing people. These Jewish religious leaders seem confused as to John's identity and purpose, but John has no ambiguity at all in his mind. Consider this quote from John the Baptist as he viewed himself in relation to Christ:

*John 1:30 - This is He on behalf of whom I said, "After me comes a Man who has **a higher rank than I**, for He existed before me."*

We must also be careful to know who we are not. Any time we take the reins of our destiny and decisions without consulting God, we in effect replace Him. How many people live life this way? Thoughts of God and

His ways may never shape the worldview of many in our world, but I encourage you not to take on the role of God in your life. We are not our own masters; we do not ultimately decide our destiny or purpose.

John is a tremendous illustration of humility and submission. By nature, we humans do not like to be told what to do, but the key to understanding why we exist is to bow our knee to our Creator and willingly place ourselves under His sovereign design and care.

WE MUST KNOW OUR PURPOSE

John 1:23-28— He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said." Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

When John finally did explain himself to the leaders, he was direct and full of confidence. They were relying on Jewish teaching from the Old Testament to get their answers, but John uses his opportunity here to point to the Christ, the Messiah.

We all have gifting and specific callings in our lives as well. Based on our skill, temperament, location, interests and spiritual gifts, we can be just as confident about what we should be doing with **our** lives. For those who follow Christ, this is done in all of life, but finds expression in the church:

*Romans 12:6-8 Since **we have gifts that differ** according to the grace given to us, each of us is to **exercise them accordingly**: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Paul also pointed out God's intentionality in redeeming those who trust in Christ. There is no question that the Bible teaches a design and purpose for mankind.

*Ephesians 2:10 - For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.***

In a larger sense, though, we are all designed for the same thing: **the glory of God**. Earlier as we discussed John 1:1-18, we came across the word "glory" several times. It has a meaning of significance, of weight or impression. When we live for God's glory rather than our own by treasuring Him and His ways, we reject the inborn desire to promote ourselves first. That is a purpose to which all humans have been called.

He created us "in His image" so that we would image forth His glory in the world. We were made to be prisms refracting the light of God's glory into all of life. Why God should want to give us a share in shining with His glory is a great mystery. Call it grace or mercy or love – it is an unspeakable wonder. Once we were not. Then we existed – for the glory of God!
John Piper, Desiring God, (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 2003), 56.

WE MUST KNOW WHO JESUS CHRIST IS

*John 1:29-34—The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!** This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.' I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon*

*whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' I myself have seen, and have testified that **this is the Son of God.**"*

Here John the Baptist reviews the events of Jesus' baptism. One account is given by Luke.

*Luke 3:21, 22 - Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "**You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.**"*

John audibly heard these words as God directly revealed the identity of His Son. Jesus is God who took on a human body – this was the point of the beginning of the book of John (1:14). Jesus' baptism and testimony of John the Baptist are further evidences of this truth.

To fulfill our purpose for being, we must acknowledge the same thing. Jesus is God in Whom all wisdom, beauty, glory, power and love dwell. There is no salvation in any other path than through Him (Acts 4:12; John 14:6). That's why **syncretism** is so dangerous. We cannot say there are multiple paths to God - just pick one that makes you comfortable. It is unloving to our unbelieving friends if we ever give that impression or agree with it outright.

SYN-CRE-TISM (NOUN) THE ATTEMPTED RECONCILIATION OR UNION OF DIFFERENT OR OPPOSING PRINCIPLES, PRACTICES, OR PARTIES, AS IN PHILOSOPHY OR RELIGION.

We must come to God on His terms, not create our own ways.

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
Room 153, House Office Building