

# YOUR STORY GOD'S GLORY

PURSUING THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

RIVER OAKS | TIMBERGROVE | ONLINE

January 3, 2021

## Your Story | God's Glory: Finding Purpose in Your Place

On a scale of 1-to-5, how certain are you that your life has real purpose? (Circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
I'm pretty sure life's an accident	Life means whatever ever you want it to be	There must be some reason for life, right?	I think I'm here for a reason	Yeah I know my life's purpose

Can you explain a bit about why you answered the way that you did?

### INTRO: Your Story | God's Glory: Pursuing the Purpose of Life

Welcome to our new season of Story Groups based on our message series called "Your Story | God's Glory"! Starting this week, we're going to spend a month learning about the purpose of life according to the Bible. Whether you're someone who loves the Bible or you consider yourself a skeptic, or any combination of the two, I'm really glad you're here, and I'm looking forward to this month-long journey of learning more about life's purpose with my Story family!

Love, Pastor Eric

This week we'll learn about finding PURPOSE in your PLACE.

Colossians 1:15-16 *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*

What does this passage reveal about Jesus ("the Son"), especially regarding his power and place over all of creation?

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Paying special attention to the last phrase in this passage - *all things have been created through him and for him* - what can we learn about the purpose of all created things?

Based on this passage, how should we describe our *place* in the world, especially in relation to God?

Finding PURPOSE in your PLACE means embracing your life's mission:

You exist to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_!

1. You exist to \_\_\_\_\_.

Romans 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

What is worship?

What does the act of *surrender* have to do with worshiping God?

2. You exist to \_\_\_\_\_.

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**Romans 12:3-8** *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

What is service?

Make a list of the different gifts the Apostle Paul listed in this passage along with a modern-day example of what it might look like to put each gift to use (example: "Teaching: serving with The Story's Student Ministries to teach young people about the Bible").

3. You exist to \_\_\_\_\_.

**Romans 12:9-12** *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

In the context of this passage, what is love?

What does how we treat each other say about how much we love God? (John 15:9-17 & 1 John 4:7-11)

Why might it be so important for us to learn how to love God and each other during our time on earth? (1 Corinthians 13:13)

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RIVER OAKS | TIMBERGROVE | ONLINE

January 10, 2021

**Your Story | God's Glory: Finding Purpose in Your Pain**

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## **INTRO: Your Story | God's Glory: Pursuing the Purpose of Life**

This January, we're learning about the purpose of life according to the Bible. Whether you're someone who loves the Bible or you consider yourself a skeptic, or any combination of the two, I'm really glad you're here, and I'm looking forward to this month-long journey of learning more about life's purpose with my Story family! Love, Pastor Eric

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Think about a time in your life when you felt very close to God (or closer than you feel now). What were the circumstances going on around you that may have contributed to how close you felt to God?

In your experience, what role do pain and suffering play in opening us up to experiencing God's presence?

This week we're learning about finding PURPOSE in your PAIN. First, let's revisit the foundational Bible passage for this series:

**Colossians 1:15-16** *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*

Based on what you know about Jesus, a.k.a. "The Son," how could he possibly relate to our pain and suffering?

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If we have been created through Christ and for Christ, how should that affect the way we view seasons of suffering?

If you watched or listened to Pastor Eric's message with Greg Kelley, write down any takeaways, ideas, or questions that stood out to you:

Let's take a closer look at a passage from the Bible that teaches us how to deal with pain:

**Romans 8:28** *We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.*

This passage is often taken to mean that, once you're a Christian, God watches your back and bad things won't happen to you. Obviously, that's not what this passage says. As Greg Kelley and Pastor Eric discussed in this week's sermon, Jesus told his disciples, "In this life you will have trouble, but take heart, for I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

So, what *does* Romans 8:28 mean? Let's break it down one phrase at a time:

- **We know...** How do we *know*? Based on what experience or truth can we claim to *know* something about God?
- **...that God causes...** If God is God, then He must be the First Cause of the universe, right? Even when it doesn't feel that way, there is a greater plan and purpose for the universe, and for you. If we really believed that to be the case, how would it change the way we experience seasons of pain and hardship?

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- **...everything to work together...** The events of your life aren't random or meaningless, but each season is part of a greater story God is telling through your life. How would you describe the "season" that you are in right now, and how do you think this particular season might be part of God's greater story?
  
- **...for the good of those who love God...** When we struggle, it's important to remember that God is in the GOOD business. Time and time again in Scripture, God entered into a situation that seems hopeless, and He made something good come out of it. Can you remember a time in your life when everything seemed dark and all hope seemed lost, but somehow God walked you through it?
  
- **...and are called according to his purpose...** There's that word again: purpose. We believe we were made through Christ...*for Christ*. Everything that God allows to happen in your life is ultimately to make you more like Christ. How has the pain of your past shaped you to live and love more like Christ?

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RIVER OAKS | TIMBERGROVE | ONLINE

January 17, 2021

## Your Story | God's Glory: Finding Purpose in Your Passion

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### **INTRO: Your Story | God's Glory: Pursuing the Purpose of Life**

This January, we're learning about the purpose of life according to the Bible. Whether you're someone who loves the Bible or you consider yourself a skeptic, or any combination of the two, I'm really glad you're here, and I'm looking forward to this month-long journey of learning more about life's purpose with my Story family! Love, Pastor Eric

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Complete the following sentence (feel free to write multiple answers!): *I feel like I'm most alive when I am...*

What, specifically, is it about that activity or habit makes you feel alive?

This week we're learning about finding PURPOSE in your PASSION. The primary Bible passage for this week is found in the New Testament book called Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 10:

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

If you look for it, you'll find a running theme throughout the Bible: God designed you for a specific purpose. Like an architect or a programmer, God built you - your character, your personality, your strengths, and your ambitions - to His exact specifications (Psalm 139:13-14, Romans 12:6, Jeremiah 1:5). **If God hardwired you to feel *alive* when doing the things you listed above, what might that say about your life's bigger purpose?**

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Your \_\_\_\_\_ point toward your \_\_\_\_\_!  
(But be careful! Sometimes our \_\_\_\_\_ become \_\_\_\_\_!)

Biblically speaking, a true *passion* is:

A mere distraction, on the other hand, is:

How can we know whether something that makes us feel alive is a God-given passion or a meaningless distraction?

**1. Look to the \_\_\_\_\_.**

*Ask: Does this activity/habit/person/thing conform to the Word of God?*

**2. Search your \_\_\_\_\_.**

*Ask: When it comes to the investment of my time, money, and attention, is it well with my soul? When I stand before the Lord to give a full account of my life (2 Corinthians 5:10), will I be proud or ashamed of my investment in this passion?*



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### 3. Examine the \_\_\_\_\_.

*Ask: What is my return on this investment? Have the seeds I've been planting yielded fruit that is pleasing to God (Matthew 7:17-20)?*

List a few examples of God-given passions that you have experienced in your own life, or that you have witnessed in the lives of others.

Now list a few examples of distractions that may look and feel like passions but are probably not of God:

*Love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your \_\_\_\_\_.*

Deuteronomy 11:13

How do your passions point toward your life's purpose? In other words, how might the things that make you feel *alive* be indicative of God's will for your life?

Name one or two simple things you can do this week to begin transforming your mere distractions into purposeful passions that bring God glory?

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RIVER OAKS | TIMBERGROVE | ONLINE

January 24, 2021

**Your Story | God's Glory: Finding Purpose in Your Power**

**INTRO: Your Story | God's Glory: Pursuing the Purpose of Life**

*This January, we're learning about the purpose of life according to the Bible. Whether you're someone who loves the Bible or you consider yourself a skeptic, or any combination of the two, I'm really glad you're here, and I'm really enjoying this month-long journey of learning more about life's purpose with my Story family! Love, Pastor Eric*

Think about the last time you really served someone, out of the goodness of your heart, with no strings attached. What did you do for them? What did it mean to them? And to you?

Jesus once said to his followers, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...**" (Matthew 20:26-28). **What are the implications of this for followers of Jesus today?**

You were \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_!

This week we're learning about finding PURPOSE in your POWER. Here's our primary Bible passage for this week's message:

**2 Timothy 1:7-9** For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

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According to this passage, what is God's purpose for our lives?

Paul uses the word "power" twice in this passage. Where does this power come from?

God \_\_\_\_\_ all \_\_\_\_\_ into \_\_\_\_\_.

**1 Corinthians 6:17-20** But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit... Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

*Excuses, excuses.* On your own, read **Luke 14:18-35**. What excuses do the people in this story use to avoid making an appearance at the man's party?

When it comes to serving God and our neighbors, we've all come up with excuses from time to time to avoid doing the work. So let's be honest: what are some of your go-to excuses?

When we decide to stop making excuses, and to receive the power of God through the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to serve God and our neighbors in a variety of ways:

- \_\_\_\_\_  
How can a godly attitude be a manifestation of God's power in your daily life?

List some of the reasons why you sometimes choose to have an ungodly attitude. What can you do to claim a more godly perspective, even when the circumstances around you are less than ideal?

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- \_\_\_\_\_  
List some of the *abilities* - physical, spiritual, social, or financial - that God has given you:

Which of these abilities have you already used to serve God and the world around you?  
And which of these abilities have you kept under wraps?

- \_\_\_\_\_  
Has someone ever been *available* to you in ways that demonstrated God's power in your life? Who was it, and how was their availability a gift to you?

How can you choose to be more available to God and to the people in your life?

As you think about some of the specific ways in which God has empowered you to serve Him and the world around you, what are you learning about your life's purpose?

What old habits or thought-patterns need to change so you can live your God-given purpose?

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RIVER OAKS | TIMBERGROVE | ONLINE

January 31, 2021

## Your Story | God's Glory: Finding Purpose with People

### INTRO: Your Story | God's Glory: Pursuing the Purpose of Life

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Think about the last time you shared the gospel with someone - what was the context? How did you share it, and was it effective? (If you've never shared the gospel with anyone, can you think of a time someone shared the gospel with you?)

Understanding Jesus' mission is essential as we seek to fulfill our purpose within the body of Christ. What are some of the ways in which Christians can miscommunicate or overcomplicate the simplicity of Jesus' mission? How might this affect new believers who want to follow him?

<u>Historic Christianity:</u>	<u>Contemporary Critical Theory:</u>
1. We are human beings made in the image of a holy, loving, and just God.	1. Our identity is not found in who we are created to be, but in how we relate with other groups as defined by our class, gender, sexual preference, and so on.
2. Sin against a holy God is what's wrong with the world.	2. Oppression is what's wrong
3. The sin problem is fixed by Jesus taking punishment for our sins upon himself, dying the death we deserve, so we could be reconciled to God.	3. The problem of oppression is fixed by activism, raising awareness, and the overthrow of oppressive systems and their power.
4. The meaning of life: To glorify God	4. The meaning of life: To free groups from oppression.

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*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16* How does this passage inform us of the mission Jesus came to accomplish during this time on earth?

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave us very specific instructions on what we're called to do: *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Matthew 28:19-20* How does this passage inform us of our mission and purpose within the body of Christ?

What key role do each of us play in making this mission a reality?

**We follow Jesus' example by sharing the message \_\_\_\_\_ at a time**

What key component do we need in order to effectively share the gospel with others?

**A \_\_\_\_\_ with Jesus**

Do you know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, and are you able to articulate the change that you have experienced since you surrendered your life to him?

What are some of the things you can actively do (new disciplines or practices) in order to find your purpose within the body of Christ?