

Gospel Blueprints | Why Do I Exist (purpose)?

October 3, 2021 | Matthew McNutt

Gospel Blueprints. What does that mean? We understand that blueprints provide the designs for how things should be built, they are a tool designed to allow us to create things that function as intended. Normally, we think of blueprints as referring to things that are concrete. A house. That Ikea dresser. The bike that you had 90% finished assembling before you realized you did something backward at the beginning.

But blueprints work in the abstract as well. Our world, our culture, tells us to create our lives in certain ways, with values and ideas dictated to us, whether we recognize it or not. At the same time, God has given us blueprints, gospel blueprints, designs for our lives. One of the underlying values in this series is the idea that since God designed us, since He created this world, our universe, since He knit our beings together, as loud as our culture is around us, and as distracting as it can be, when we function according to His design, we are living the life we were literally wired to live.

Over the last few weeks we have been going after some of the big questions; two weeks ago, Pastor Nate answered the question, “What is truth?” Last week, he asked the question “Who am I?”, and examined identity.

And following Nate’s use of Disney Princesses to explain the topics, I think **Moana** is the perfect intro to today’s message. I’m not going to lie, I love this movie for several reasons:

1. Dwayne Johnson, the Rock, voices a character. Everything he does is awesome.
2. Alan Tudyk, one of my favorite actors, is the voice of the chicken. I mean, come on.
3. Moana. She stands out from other Disney princesses in that she has such a clear sense of purpose and mission throughout the movie. Over and over you hear her say, **“I am Moana of Motunui. Aboard my boat, I will sail across the sea, and restore the heart of Te Fiti.”** She also sings a song about it. Of course. But it’s that sense of purpose that reminds me of our blueprint:

Today, we’re asking the question, **“Why do I exist?” Do we have a purpose?**

When I was a waiter at what used to be the Macaroni Grill 21 years ago, one of the cooks once complained to me, “I spend all my time working at this job so I can have a truck and an apartment. And why do I have a truck and an apartment? So, I can drive to and from work, and sleep after work. It’s a pointless cycle.”

I was 16 when I wrestled with the idea of purpose for the first time. I was taking a speech class and had been assigned to come up with a five-minute mini-message that I would give to the class on a scripture passage. At the time, filling five minutes in front

of people was a terrifying concept. Don't get excited, I got over it. We'll be here a lot longer than that! The night before it was due, I was frantically flipping through the book of Proverbs hoping to find a saying I could somehow riff on for five minutes. I stumbled across Proverbs 16:9,

Proverbs 16:9 (NLT) We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.

I started thinking about all my plans. I had visions of a high paying career and all the things I would be able to accumulate because of it. I thought about traveling the world, the type of home and cars I would have. And then I had this overwhelming sense of fear, this anxiety that ripped through my body –it all suddenly seemed so empty, so meaningless to me. I knew I would never be satisfied, and it terrified me that I had so many years of emptiness ahead of me.

Henry David Thoreau, an American philosopher, wrote, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work.”¹

The quote resonates with people because we understand this desperation. The idea of being resigned to vocation, to where we live, to how we live. A meaninglessness that seems impossible to escape.

It only takes a few clicks on your device to realize the question of purpose is one that has challenged humanity for millennia. And we've done the science; people who have a sense of purpose live longer and experience more happiness and satisfaction with life.² The problem is, there is not a lot of agreement on what that purpose is. I found one website that had a great summary of many of the different theories our world has produced to answer the question, what is our purpose³:

- Prehistoric: Natural Pantheism, care for nature
- 9th century BC: Daoism, follow the way, but no one can tell what it is
- 6th century BC: Determinism, accept that everything is pre-determined
- 5th century BC: Confucianism, fulfill your duties to others
- 5th century BC: Mohism, love people impartially
- 5th century BC: Solipsism, since only you exist, you know it
- 4th century BC: Cynicism, be self-sufficient
- 4th century BC: Hedonism, have pleasure now

¹ <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/522004-resistance-to-civil-government-civil-disobedience>

² <https://www.verywellmind.com/tips-for-finding-your-purpose-in-life-4164689>

³ <https://blog.adioma.com/meaning-of-life-according-to-philosophy/>

- 4th century BC: Platonism, acquire maximum knowledge
- 4th century BC: Legalism, get practical skills
- 4th century BC: Epicureanism, free yourself from pain
- 3rd century BC: Quietism, asking this question leads to more confusion
- 3rd century BC: Aristotelianism, be a good person
- 3rd century BC: Stoicism, be dispassionate, pursue perfection through reason
- 1300's: Modern Humanism, act in self-interest and common good
- 1600's: Subjectivism, life's meaning is different for each person
- 1689: Liberalism, defend individual liberty
- 1785: Kantianism, do as you would have others do (your duty)
- 1862: Nihilism, do as you wish, life has no meaning (Nietzsche claimed God is dead)
- 1870: Pragmatism, bring more value to humans
- 1920's: Logical Positivism, life has no meaning until you give it one
- 1940's: Existentialism, make decisions and be positive
- 1942: Absurdism, stop trying to find a meaning, just live

And then, of course, my favorite philosopher's, Calvin and Hobbes⁴:

Calvin: I'm at peace with the world. I'm completely serene.

Hobbes: Why is that?

Calvin: I've discovered my purpose in life. I know why I was put here and why everything exists.

Hobbes: Oh really?

Calvin: Yes, I am here so everybody can do what I want.

Hobbes: It's nice to have that cleared up.

Calvin: Once everyone accepts it, they'll be serene too.

So what am I saying? Humanity is desperate for purpose. But the skyrocketing rates of depression, anxiety, suicide, self-harm, dissatisfaction, all of it points to one thing: people aren't finding it.

Henry David Thoreau also wrote, "If a plant cannot live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man."⁵ I believe our nature is to live the purpose God designed us to live.

So, I was 16 and terrified that my life would have no real meaning. And then I looked at the second half of that verse in Proverbs:

⁴ https://plw.me/wp-content/uploads/calvin-and-hobbes_comic03.gif

⁵ <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/522004-resistance-to-civil-government-civil-disobedience>

Proverbs 16:9 (NLT) We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.

“The Lord determines our steps.” That was the moment I believe I gave my life to God. Yes, I said a prayer when I was four years old, was baptized when I was ten years old, and got super involved in my youth group at 12, in case my mom fact checks this sermon. But that was my parents’ religion. This was the moment it became mine. It clicked into place for me; regardless of what my career was some day, regardless of where I lived, regardless of who I was with, if God was determining my steps, my life would have the purpose it was created to have.

Over the last few weeks, we have been turning to Colossians 3:1-4. These verses were written in response false philosophies of the day – sound familiar? Paul saw that the Colossians needed some clarity on exactly the same questions we deal with today, they are fundamental to the human experience. So over the course of his letter he took it head-on, culminating in these verses.

Colossians 3:1-4 (NLT) ¹ Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand.

Do you see what he is saying? When we become Christians we are transformed, we have been raised to a new life – the old life is dead, just like the sin that had dictated its values and purpose. “Set your sights” is exactly what it sounds like; put your focus on God! This is a new life with a new purpose, and it is the stuff of heaven, the stuff of eternity that is our focus.

² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

All those philosophies I listed, those are the things of earth. Some of them sound so good, some of them sound so close to the real thing. Part of why I listed so many is that they all made sense to someone – and in a room with this many people, different ones will beckon different people. But they all have this in common: they leave us with something missing.

MARINERS SHIRT STORY. I’m a Mariners fan. Apparently, I like teams that will never make it to the World Series. Yes, they’re making a run for it this year. But I’ve lived this before. A few years ago, I ordered a Mariners shirt online; it may look okay from where you’re sitting – but up close, it becomes an obvious fake. The material is wrong, the printing is blurry, I’ve never worn it. It’s so close, and yet so wrong.

It’s the same thing with all those philosophies. Some of it can seem so good ... from a distance. But it just doesn’t hold up when you get close and examine it. Our purpose comes from heaven, not earth. Paul writes that we have been raised with Christ; we share in His resurrection.

Dr. Peter O'Brien writes in his commentary that because we share in His resurrection, **“your aims, ambitions, in fact your whole outlook, are to be centered in him.”**⁶ Our interests are to be God's interests. We have the ultimate purpose.

We are to “set our sights” on God! Here's why:

³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

The Greek tenses here make it clear to scholars that these verses are written as an ongoing challenge; we are to continue to set our sights on God, to continue to think of the things of heaven, to continue to view our lives hidden with Christ in God. It is saying that our very will should be directed to God.

Scot McKnight writes in his commentary, **“To seek the things above, then, means to live a life on earth under the resurrected King Jesus as the Lord of all creation.”**⁷ We are to have no other lords over us, including the values and priorities of this world.

Remember, these verses are specifically in response to the false philosophies of the day. Paul is giving them a wakeup call, THIS is what your life is now, THIS is your purpose, your meaning, THIS is where you find your fulfillment and joy.

This idea is repeated throughout scripture:

1 John 5:12 (NLT) Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

How do we seek the things above?

1. Our purpose is to glorify God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NLT) So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

I have always loved this verse because it is both simple, and yet, it's also overwhelming. Our purpose envelops every aspect of our lives. Everything we do can be for God's glory; how we work, our integrity, how we interact with our family, how we treat our school work, our attitude on the field. We reflect who we belong to, our purpose is to glorify God, to make Him look good through our actions.

David Platt writes, “While the goal of the American dream is to make much of us, the goal of the gospel is to make much of God.”⁸

⁶ Peter Thomas O'Brien and Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians/Philemon: Word Biblical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 159.

⁷ Scot McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians (New International Commentary on the New Testament)* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), Kindle location 8593.

⁸ David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (New York, NY: Multnomah Books, 2017), 46.

What needs to change to make much of God at work? At home? At school? With our friends? In our clubs? Our teams?

2. Our purpose is to **make disciples.**

Matthew 28:19 (NLT) Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Our motives, the things that excite us, are to come from heaven. We find our fulfillment, our joy and satisfaction, our peace, in being a disciple, a follower of God. If our heart reflects God's heart, we'll want to see others experience that joy. If it has been years since you have shared your faith, if the people outside of this building have no idea who you belong to, are you really pursuing God? Are you really living a life that has been transformed?

Or is church just a hobby, something that's interesting, but doesn't impact the rest of your life? Matt Chandler asks the question in his book, "Are you using God to get something from Him? Or is God Himself the goal of your striving?"⁹

3. Our purpose is to love God, love others.

Mark 12:30-31 (NLT) ³⁰"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength." ³¹The second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself." No other commandment is greater than these."

Francis Chan wrote in his book, *Forgotten God*, "This is the question I just can't get around: If it's true that the Spirit of God dwells in us and that our bodies are the Holy Spirit's temple, then shouldn't there be a huge difference between the person who has the Spirit of God living inside of him or her and the person who does not?"¹⁰

The greatest way we live out this difference, the greatest way we show our purpose, is to be known for our love, to be known for God's love. How are you known at work? In your home? At school? When you're out with friends? How are you known online? How can you grow in living out this purpose?

Pray / transition to communion

⁹ Matt Chandler, *To Live Is Christ to Die Is Gain* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook Publishing Company, 2014), 74.

¹⁰ Francis Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragical Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (Colorado Springs, CO: Kingsway Communications Ltd, 2009), Kindle location 268.