

A man went to India looking for his life's purpose, but he didn't learn anything. So, after he came home, he saw a sign at the gas station that said: "*As you travel, ask us.*" So, every time he stopped at the Chevron, he'd ask the cashier, "What is the purpose of life?" One man said: "I'm sorry; I'm new here." Another said: "I'm not much for church, sir." But most people just stared at him. So, he called Chevron's Customer Service and he told them to submit his question in writing. He did and they responded by sending him an application for a credit card.

You know, you're not going to find your purpose at a gas station or a talk show or a self-help book. If you want to know why you're here, you need to read the Owner's manual. And until you do that, life isn't going to make sense.

So, today, we're starting our 40 Days of Purpose Campaign by looking at the first of God's five purposes for us. Revelations 4:12 says: "You created everything and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created." We were created for God's enjoyment; He made us to enjoy us; He planned us for His purpose.

Now, parents understand this. We enjoy watching our kids and grandkids. And so does God. We were made for God's pleasure. When you were born, God was there with a big smile on His face.

Now, last week, we learned that God created us to love us. And the flip side of this is: God wants us to love Him back. One day, a man asked Jesus what the most important command in the Bible was. And Jesus said: "Love the Lord your God. This is the first and greatest commandment." If you don't do anything else in life, we're supposed to love God back.

Now, there's a word for this: worship. Worship is knowing and loving God. Now, many people misunderstand worship. When we think about worship, we think about prayer and singing and liturgy, but worship is more than that. Our first purpose is to worship God! It's our primary purpose, our highest priority.

What does worship look like? Most people think it's someone standing with hands up and mouth open. But it's more than that. There are many ways to worship God. Romans 12:1 says: "Because of God's mercy to us ... offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service and pleasing to Him. This is the true worship that you should offer." Worship is an offering.

I need to point out two things here. First, worship is my response to God's love. Worship is just the way I respond to God's love. Paul said: "Because of God's great mercy," worship God. God acts; we react! God forgives, blesses, and protects; we worship in response.

Second, worship is giving back to God. He gives to us; we give back to Him. This is worship and this brings pleasure to God. When your kids are grateful, aren't you happy? So is God! Now, what are you suppose to offer to God? Mark 12 says: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength."

God wants to be loved in three ways. First, God wants to be loved thoughtfully; He said: "Love me with your mind." Second, God wants to be loved passionately; He said: "Love me with your heart." Third, God wants to be loved practically; He said: "Love me with all your strength." You see, even though God created the entire world, there are three things God doesn't have unless you give them to Him: your attention, your affection, and your abilities.

And so, when you take the time to give these things to God, you are worshiping. And that's the heart of worship.

The Heart of Worship

First, worship is focusing my attention on God. It is focusing my mind and my thoughts on God. Now, some religions ask you to put your mind in neutral, but God wants you to engage your minds. We don't put our minds on autopilot; we focus our minds on Christ.

God wants our focus because He is focused on us. Psalm 139:1 says: "You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me. You know when I am resting and when I am working. You notice everything I do and everywhere I go." You are the focus of God's attention because He loves you.

Remember falling in love the first time? You just couldn't get that person off your mind? You thought about him or her all the time and you dreamed about him or her at night. And we can choose to focus on God that way.

How do we do that? Well, we have to realize that there are two things that distract us. We are distracted by self-centeredness and we are distracted by our culture. Romans 8:7 says: "Focusing on yourself is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God and ends up thinking more about self than God." And Romans 12:2 says: "Don't become so well-adjusted to our culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God." We must choose to put some things out of our minds so that we can focus our attention on God.

Now, how do you do that? Well, you start by establishing a daily quiet time when you stop everything to be with God. Talk to Him and read His word. Matthew 6:6 says: "Find a quiet secluded

place, so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God and you will begin to sense His grace."

Place is important. In the OT, there was once place to worship, the temple. But now, we can worship anywhere. Find a special place to focus on God. You don't need ceremony or fancy words, just sit there and be with God. Establish a time with God.

The second thing you can do to focus on God is: develop a constant conversation with God. Psalm 105:4 says: "Worship God continually." You can think of God throughout the day and carry on a constant conversation with Him throughout the day.

Now, there are incredible benefits to focusing on God. Isaiah 26:3 says: "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you." When you focus on you, the result is: worry, insecurity, anxiety, guilt, fear, and discouragement. But when you focus on God you are filled with gratitude and hope and confidence and love.

Worship is focusing my attention on God and worship is expressing my affection to God. This is loving God with my heart and soul. Now, some folks aren't too good with affection, but we need to tell God we love Him ever once in a while. Do you remember saying that to someone for the first time? It probably scared you to death. Your palms were sweating and your stomach was in knots, because you were scared of being rejected. But listen: God won't reject you. He already died for you. He loves you and all He wants is to be loved back.

The Bible says: "We love Him, because He first loved us." God is a lover and wants to be loved. Hosea 6 says: "I don't want your sacrifices; I want your love. I don't want your offerings; I want you to know me."

Your first purpose is to know and love God. If you do this, you'll do something great. God wants you to know Him and to love Him, because He knows and loves you. And if you don't accomplish anything else all day long, your day will still be a success. On the other hand, if you accomplish everything else and still don't know God better or love Him more, you've wasted your day. God wants you to know Him and to love Him and we do that by focusing our attention and expressing our affection.

You see, God is passionate about you. Exodus 34 says: "He is the One who is passionate about His relationship with you." Now, men I want you to try this: walk in tonight with flowers in your hand and say, 'Honey, here are some flowers for you and I'm giving you these because 1) I'm your husband; 2) it's our anniversary; and 3) husbands are supposed to do this on their anniversary.'" Wouldn't she be happy? No! Because she wants your passion, not your duty. And so it is with God. God doesn't want our duty; He wants our desire. He doesn't want our ritual; He wants a relationship.

So, how do we express our affection to God. Well, we start by just saying "thanks". Look at everything you have and give thanks to God. Thanks for family and friends, for your beautiful creation, for waking me up this morning, and for all your blessings.

Now, some people think worship is just singing. That's one way but that's not the only way. You can express your affection in many ways. The best way to worship is to give Him your life, commit yourself, your whole life to God. Romans 6 says: "Give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life."

Now, this is really scary for some folks. It scares people to surrender their lives fully to God. They think if they do that then

God is going to ask too much of them or turn them into a fanatic or something. But God doesn't want to embarrass you; He wants you to be the you He created you to be. And the more you love God the more fully alive you will become.

Loving God is using my abilities for God. This is loving God with all your strength. You see, God wants us to see Him with our minds, to sense Him with our hearts and souls, and to serve Him with our strength. You see, it takes more than kisses to express affection. I can say, "I love you, Lori" but if I haven't taken out the trash lately, I'm in trouble. See, she wants a physical, practical expression of my love.

Colossians 3:23 says: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people." Notice, Paul said: "Whatever you do." That means anything. You see, you don't have to join a monastery to worship God; you worship God right where you are. You don't worship God just at church; you worship God everywhere. You don't just worship God in the liturgy; you worship God in every day life too.

You see, when it comes to worship, who you do it for matters more than what you do. When you do it for God, no matter what you do, it's worship. That means, your worship can be teaching, or nursing, or gardening.

This turns all of life into worship.

Romans 12 says: "Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, your eating, your going to work, your walk-around life – and place it before God as an offering."

What would happen if you got up tomorrow morning and said: "God, I'm going to work today and it is the same old work I've been doing for years now, but this time I'm going back with you as my boss." What would that do to your job?

Now, everybody worship something. We are wired for worship. It's part of our DNA and if you don't worship God, you'll worship something else.

Some people worship celebrities; some worship their career; some worship retirement. Some worship recreation and pleasure. Some worship their family. And the greatest temptation we face is to worship something or someone other than God. And that's what the Bible calls idolatry. Now, most folks would say, "well, Tucker, I don't have that problem." But the truth is: if you are putting anything before God, then you do. Everybody is tempted to do this; even Jesus! Jesus was tempted to misdirect His worship.

Joel Morgan planned to visit missionaries in Eastern Europe. So he asked some friends what to pack. They said food snacks for yourself because there isn't much to eat in the rural villages of Eastern Europe. As he walked through the grocery store, he prayed, "Lord, what might make it through customs?" He picked up Reese's peanut butter cups, some tapioca pudding, some hard candy and gum, and some malt, some small cans of fruit cocktail. When Joel arrived in Romania, he stayed with a missionary family who were living in very harsh conditions, often without heat and electricity. They enjoy a very good evening of conversation and prayer together. And as Joel started to leave, he remembered the snacks he had brought for himself and he had an idea. He thought, you know it is only October, but why not use these snacks to celebrate Christmas? So he got his backpack and began to play Santa Claus in the living room. He asked the missionaries' two daughters, "If you could have one thing from the US, what would it be?" In unison, they said: "Candy." Joel said: "What kind?" The mother said: "They love Reese's Peanut Butter cups. But they aren't available here." So,

he reached in the bag and pulled out the candy and gave it to the girls.

Wiping away a tear, he asked the mother, "What item from home would you like?" And she said: "I miss fruit, especially citrus." He reached in the bag and pulled out the fruit cocktail. Now, everybody was laughing and crying at the same time. Then, he turned to the father and pulled out the last thing in the bag. He said: "Gary, what's your favorite desert?" The man said: "Tapioca pudding." And what followed next was pandemonium. AS they laughed and cried and thanked God for His goodness.

We could share stories for the rest of the day. We all have a story of God's love and care for us. That's the God we worship. When you understand how much He cares about you, how much he loves you, you can't help but love Him back. Do you know what you're going to do in heaven? In heaven, we're going to give God our attention, our affection, and our abilities for eternity. And we've got the rest of our lives to practice for eternity.

Now, the greatest mistake you can make in life is to miss your primary purpose. So let me ask you a question: what do you think about most? Because whatever you think about is what you love. What do you think about when your mind drifts? That's what you worship. Did you know that your checkbook and your calendar are theological documents? Without even knowing you, I can look at your checkbook and your calendar and tell you what you love, because what you spend your money on and where you spend your time shows what you love. The Bible says you were planned for God's pleasure. You were made to know and love God. So I challenge you to make as the number one goal of your life before everything else, getting to know and love God, because that brings Him pleasure. You make as your goal what Paul said in the last verse on your outline: "So we make it our goal to please

Him.” There’s not a better goal in life to have than that one right there.