

*Sermon: What Have We Learned?  
Text: Deuteronomy 11:2  
Date: November 23, 2008 AM  
Place: Jesup First UMC*

Well, we've come to the end of our 40 Days of Purpose Campaign. And today is Celebration Sunday, an opportunity for us to look back at what we've learned and celebrate what God has done. Deuteronomy 11:2 says: *"Remember today what you have learned about the Lord through your experiences with Him."*

**So, what have we learned about God? Well, first, we've learned it's not about me; it's all about God!** Hebrews 2 says: *"God is the one who made all things and all things are for His glory."* So, everything we do is for His glory. We worship for His glory! We fellowship for His glory. We study for His glory! We serve for His glory and we reach out to others for His glory! The Bible says: *"Everything got started in Him and finds its purpose in Him."*

It's not about me; it's about God!

**Second, we've learned that God is still working miracles at Jesup First.** Listen, some tremendous things have happened in the last 40 Days. Over 105 people participated in this campaign! New friendships were formed; old friendships were deepened. There has been a different attitude in the air during these 40 Days.

**Third, we learned that what we do is just preparation for eternity.** Now, one day, our physical bodies are going to die, but friends, there is a part of us that is going to live forever. So, we worship here so that we can worship more perfectly in heaven. We

fellowship here so that our fellowship will be sweeter in heaven. We learn and grow here so that our growth might be made complete in heaven. We serve here so that we might serve more perfectly in heaven. And the only thing the church does now that we will not do in heaven is evangelism. So, we're getting ready for eternity. And Ecclesiastes 3 says in the meantime, "God has planted eternity in the human heart."

Someone told me just this week: "*You know, Tucker, when we first started talking about 40 Days of Purpose, I thought: 'Purpose? Life doesn't have a purpose! We're just here to get through.'* But now I understand for the first time in my life that my life does have a purpose. And so, I want to spend the rest of my life living with purpose." Listen friends, if nothing else happened in the last 40 Days, that's enough!

But more did happen. Others throughout our congregation discovered their purpose. Proverbs 16 says: "The Lord has made everything for His purpose." You see, I was planned for God's pleasure; that's worship! I was formed for God's family; that's fellowship! I was created to be like Jesus; that's discipleship! I was shaped to serve God; that's ministry! And I was made for a mission; that's evangelism!

And now, we can all spend the rest of our lives getting ready for eternity!

**Now, what have we learned about growing?** Well, over the last 40 Days, we learned that we grow by making commitments and entering

into relationships. In fact, if I had to summarize what 40 Days of Purpose is about, I would say: making commitments and deepening relationships. It takes more than coming to church to grow. You've got to live out what you learn. James 2:17 says: "*Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*" You can go to church for the rest of your life, but if you don't do anything about it, what good is it?

And so, we made some significant commitments in the last 40 Days. We committed to a daily devotional time and most of us kept it. Someone said: "*Tucker, I've never done that before. So what am I supposed to do now?*" Hey, get an Upper Room or go to the Christian bookstore and buy a devotional guide and keep it up. Don't stop now, just because the campaign is over.

Last Sunday, on Commitment Sunday, \_\_\_ people turned in Commitment Cards vowing to serve God through the various ministries of our church. \_\_\_ people pledged \_\_\_\_\_ to help carry out the programs and ministries of our church. That's commitment and that's how you grow!

***The point is: we don't grow by sitting and listening; we grow by making commitments and keeping them.*** We grow by deepening our fellowship with others, because we don't grow alone. True holiness and godliness is always demonstrated in our relationships with others. So, over 105 people made the commitment to go to a Huddle. Wow! 105 people in small groups! And nobody died! In fact, we're a lot stronger today because of it, because Proverbs 27

says: “*As iron sharpens iron, so people can improve each other.*”

You know, my hope is that when we start our small groups back after the first of the year, everybody will think seriously about being involved. I think John Wesley had it right when he started the Methodist Movement on small groups. There is very little more important for your spiritual growth than getting involved in a small group. So, get in a group. Paul told the church at Philippi: “*Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard, and the God of peace will be with you.*” Paul says, “*Don’t stop doing the things that help you the most.*” So, we ought to stay in our groups. And if you don’t want to stay in the group you’re in, start a new one. And if you want to start a group, tell me; I’ll help you.

We grow when we make commitments and keep them and we grow in relationship with other believers.

**Now, what have we learned about our community? Well, we’ve learned that people are hungry for spiritual things.** Some people who weren’t even associated with our church got involved in our Huddles. A few who had drifted away from the church came and participated. It was awesome! You see, people that we thought were not interested were interested enough to get involved!

I was thinking earlier this week about all the churches we have in Wayne County and I was thinking if we could fill all the churches in the county there would probably still be people who couldn’t get in. But we aren’t doing enough to attract new people

to our church. Listen, friends: if we fill the church with 200 at 8:30 and 200 at 11:00, we'll start a third service at 9:45 and if you'll help me fill it too. Jesus said: "Look around you! Vast fields of human souls are ripening all around us and they are ready now for reaping." There are people out there just waiting to be invited to church. Go find them!

There's a lot of people out there who are hungry for spiritual things.

Well, we've learned a lot over the last 40 Days! And now, we've got to answer the most important question of the morning: what are we going to do about it? We've learned a lot; **now what?** Well, let me suggest two things:

**First, start living what we've learned!** The Bible says: "Be doers of the word and not hearers only." All the learning, all the knowledge in the world is worthless unless we practice it. Jesus said: "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." The real blessing of our 40 Days of Purpose is not discovering your purpose; it is living out your purpose.

Ephesians 5 says: "Live life with a due sense of responsibility, not as those who do not know the meaning of life but as those who do." You are more responsible today than you were 40 Days ago, because you know more. We can't go forward as a church pretending that the last 40 Days never happened. We were planned for God's pleasure, so our worship needs to be different. We were formed for God's family, so we need to be more intentional about our times of fellowship. We were created to be like Jesus, so we

need to study and grow in our walk with Christ. We were shaped to serve, so we each need to find a place to serve God through Jesup First. We were made for a mission, so we must reach out to our friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors who don't go to church and invite them to be part of our church family. You see, we can't go back. Philippians 3 says: "Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it."

The second thing we can do is: pass it on! Tell others what you have learned in the last 40 Days. God doesn't want us to be reservoirs; He wants us to be channels. We're not blessed to keep it to ourselves; we're blessed to be a blessing to others. And when you pass on to others what you have received from God, you'll keep growing and growing more and more.

As we close today, I want you to know something: I'm so proud of you. There's no place I'd rather be than Jesup First UMC. We've taken a giant leap forward in the last 40 Days. I'm so thankful for what God has done in our lives. And I just want to thank Him.

**Sing:** Jesus, we just want to thank you!

And most of all, I want to thank Him for you. Paul said: "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for every one of you because the news of your faith is spreading throughout the whole world." So, let me pray for you ... Lord Jesus, ...