

ON PURPOSE

GOD BLESSES ON PURPOSE

On Purpose | *Time with God* | Shawn Johnson | 1.15.17

LG Weekly

START .

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

You are approached by an extremely wealthy entrepreneur who feels led by God to financially support you for 3 years so you can start your own company or organization. What would you start up?

SHARE .

Welcome to our series "On Purpose."

God blesses with a purpose. What we have in life was given to us for a reason. Think for a moment about what God has given to you (besides a relationship with Him, which is the best thing). He has given each of us time, abilities, and resources that we get to choose how to use.

There is a purpose behind the blessing of time. God has granted us a window of time to walk upon this earth, to get to know Him better, and to make an impact with our lives. We can 'on purpose' use our time for things that matter, or we can choose to waste it away.

There is a purpose behind the talents and abilities you have. You have been hard-wired with abilities that are unique and special. For some, abilities to teach, discern, write, paint, design, create music ... for others, abilities to devour books, make money, run companies or excel in sports. These are all God-given, and He allows us to choose whether we use those abilities to build His kingdom or our own kingdoms.

Finally, we have been blessed, 'on purpose,' with resources. It can sometimes be difficult to see that our resources are God-given, but when we really think about it, how did we earn those resources? The answer is: by our God-given talents, abilities, and time! Through these, God made us able and capable to earn a

living, which enables us to purchase the things we enjoy. When we look around at what we own – our homes, cars, bank accounts, bikes, boats, furniture, etc.; these are amazing things that we get to steward. It's our prerogative to choose if and how we purposefully bless others with what we have been given. We can open our homes, pick people up in our cars, bike with others, or give away things someone else might need. We can honor God in giving our resources toward building His Kingdom, or we can hoard them for ourselves. It is our choice.

Last week, Chad talked about seeking God first and putting him before everything else in life. As we focus on that relationship first, God will help put in right perspective all of our other concerns in life. It changes how we view our God-given time, our own abilities and what and who we spend our resources on. Putting God first helps us put everything else in order.

This week Shawn candidly talked about how each of us stewards the time we are given. What does it look like to seek first God and his kingdom with our time on earth?

Let's re-read Matthew 6:25-34

Many of us were challenged last week to begin to put God first in our lives. Red Rocks Church even created a month long devotional on our app, along with some worship music to help get us started. If you have been using that, the Bible or another devotional, what has been your experience in seeking God first?

As you seek to put God first, what are some of your personal biggest hurdles or difficulties in doing that?

G R O W

In John 15, Shawn took some time to walk through the passage where Jesus talked about remaining in him. In no way can any of us bear fruit in our lives without remaining in Jesus, meaning we are connected and growing because of God's power at work in our lives. It takes each of us choosing to use our time 'on purpose' to remain in the word and listening to God. Like any relationship, it takes time to develop that intimacy and to hear God's voice over the constant noise in life. Jesus was very intentional in his use of imagery when talking about the vine, branches and especially the loving gardener who takes care of cultivating fruit.

Read John 15:1-17

In the Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament we read about the significance of Jesus teaching about the vine and the branches:

Using the vine metaphor, Jesus expands its scope to all believers and individualizes its application. He stresses certain features. The first is that there is a genuine stock. One must plant the right kind of vine or tree in order to assure the proper quality of fruit, for no fruit can be better than the vine that produces it. Jesus said, "I am the true vine" (see comment on 6:34-36). Unless the believer is vitally connected with him, the quality of his fruitfulness will be unacceptable. There may be many branches, but if they are to bear the right kind of fruit, they must be a part of the real vine.

The second feature is that God the Father is the gardener. Success in raising any crop depends largely on the skill of the farmer or gardener. The relation of the believer to God is that of the vine to the owner of the vineyard. He tends it, waters it, and endeavors to protect it and cultivate it so that it will produce its maximum yield.

A third emphasis is on pruning. Two aspects are noted: the removal of dead wood and the trimming of live wood so that its potential for fruit-bearing will be improved. Pruning is necessary for any vine. Dead wood is worse than fruitlessness, for dead wood can harbor disease and decay. An untrimmed vine will develop long rambling branches that produce little fruit because most of the strength of the vine is given to growing wood. The gardener is concerned that the vine be healthy and productive. This caring process is a picture of God's dealings with humans. He removes the dead wood from his church and disciplines the lives of believers so that they are directed into fruitful activity.

According to Jesus' teaching, who is the vine and who are the branches?

The gardener prunes branches that bear fruit? Why?

When we experience pruning in our lives, although painful, it can actually mean that we have been fruitful in the past. It might feel discouraging, but the gardener knows that there is so much more that can happen in and through our lives, so we get clipped back in anticipation of new and healthier growth.

Have you experienced God pruning you and what has been the fruit as a result?

M O V E

Just like gardening, it takes time to watch things grow, including our relationship with God. Day by day it can feel as though very little is happening as we pray and read God's word, but we are being watered, which is feeding our growth. God makes it grow; we just spend time 'on purpose' with him. When we spend time with God, his word actually changes things when we are willing to respond to his voice.

Hebrews 4:12-13

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

Hebrews tells us that Scripture is "alive and active." In the Greek translation, it literally means that the word of God is "alert, alive to and aware, interested in" and "moving vigorously or frequently." That is not the description of dead and stagnant words, but that God is aware, alert, active, and moving in our lives. As we spend time with God, we get to experience him walking, encouraging, directing us, and many times putting his finger on thoughts and attitudes that need to change in our lives. So let's use our God-given time to seek God first: by praying, reading, and responding to God's direction.

Has there been a verse or story you have heard or read in the Bible that God has used to speak to you about your life lately? If you're open to sharing, what is it and how has it helped you?

P R A Y

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

T O G O

Lamentations 3:22-23

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

LG Weekly Writer: Brian Zibell | Editor: Margaret Vincent