

I Understanding Purpose: Why we were created

A. To Glorify God and enjoy Him forever—We do this by entering into His work and purposes

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." —Genesis 1:26-28

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'—Matthew 25:23

You made him(man) ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet—Psalm 8:6

There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. —Revelations 22:5

For we are God's fellow workers; (co-laborers)—1 Corinthians 3:9

B. Understanding what the Fall did

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true—1 John 5:19-20

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. —Colossians 1:12-14

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. —Ephesians 2:1-5

How will we exercise our authority/influence? Depends on what has formed us/or transformed us

Man's fall & sin did not take away our purpose; instead it brought a deformation of our character that comes from separation from God & being influenced by darkness—so that how we rule & exercise our authority is compromised & corrupted

Without Christ we have no choice but to be enslaved and corrupted by darkness within and without.

C. God does not abandon us but ultimately sends His own Son

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—John 1:12-14

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God—I Peter 3:18

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus—Romans 3:23-24

Definition of Redemption—to offset the bad effect; to make worthwhile; to change for the better

We are **progressively restored** into the image of God in Christ and free to follow the desires of our hearts, because they will be aligned with God and represent His very character of: **compassion, justice, mercy, love...** So that our Rule, Authority, & Labor with God will bear good fruit here now on earth and when we live forever with Him in the Future Kingdom

Redemption takes place and works its way in us through discipleship

II The Good News Jesus proclaimed and demonstrated

A. **The Kingdom of God was Jesus central theme**, he taught about it in parables (Mat. 13), explained what it looked like in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5-7), and demonstrated its power through demonic exorcisms, healings, resurrections, and many other miracles. *The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.* —1 Corinthians 4:20.

- 1) **Why Jesus was sent:** *I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns for this is why I was sent.*—Luke 4:4
- 2) **He told others to proclaim the kingdom of God.** *"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'*—Luke 10:8-9
- 3) Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, *"The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."*—Luke 17:20-21
- 4) **After his resurrection**, *he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*—Acts 1:3
- 5) **Paul the evangelist to the Gentiles**, *Boldly and without hindrance Paul preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.* — Acts 28:31

B. **The Kingdom of God** is not only a future reign by King Jesus, But the gospel Jesus preached announced accessibility to a present dominion of God

1. *Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand/has come near/is upon you*— Matthew 4:17

C. **The Kingdom of God** is where God's ways are known, where His commandments are obeyed, where His will is done, and where the abundant life Jesus spoke of and demonstrated is now accessible/available.

D. **Who is it for?** *Blessed are the poor in spirit, the spiritually bankrupt, the spiritual nobodies.* From the context he is teaching to the crowds (the demon-possessed, the paralyzed, crippled, lame, outcasts, & broken) who had just experienced the power of the kingdom through his touch as he healed, delivered and taught them (Matthew 4:23-25) They are blessed not out of merit, but simply because the Kingdom of God has come upon them.

1. **Who today would you consider the most unfortunate people around you?** The ugly, the social misfits, the uneducated, what about the immoral? Sometimes I am not sure if I want the kingdom to be open to these. In Paul's letter to Corinthians he writes, *"those who continue in their evil cannot enter the kingdom": fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, active homosexuals, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers"* (6:10). Then he adds, *"and such were some of you, but you were cleansed, made holy and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God."* To the murderer, and child-molester, the brutal and the bigot, the pornographer, war criminal, to those who rob the aged and weak: Blessed, Blessed, Blessed, as they flee into the arms of the Kingdom of God among us!

E. How do you enter? Through Repentance which is to rethink with the intent of changing & faith in Christ. *I am the way the truth, & the life.*

1. What is Repentance—A Modern Translation of Matthew 4:17

Rethink the ways in which you are living.

Rethink your values, what is important to you, what drives & motivates you & what worries and scares you.

Rethink the thoughts that occupy your mind and the emotions that stir your heart.

Rethink your dreams, your pursuits, your hardships, and your failures.

Rethink how you view your body, treat it and interact with it.

Rethink how you relate to others – family, friend, neighbor, stranger, & enemy – & how they relate to you.

Rethink the impact of your past, your approach to the present and the course for your future.

Rethink how you spend the resources God has given you – your time, your talents & your finances

Rethink all of these things in light of the Kingdom of God – the rule of God, the ways of God, the place where His will is done and abundant life results.

2. To be clear, repentance **is not just rethinking**, it is rethinking that leads to change, change that is demonstrated by bearing fruit.

3. Repentance is also **not defined by a one-time decision**. The life of a person living according to the kingdom is marked by repentance – the ongoing submission of one’s heart/will, mind, body and soul to the King in whose kingdom we now live.

F. What do you do upon entering? Stand dazed and confused because it is so different than kingdom of this world/darkness

1. What it looks like/How it functions? Jesus does not **theorize but plunges immediately into the core of human existence**: raging anger, contempt, hatred, obsessive lust, divorce, verbal manipulation, revenge, slapping, suing, cursing, coercing, and begging. It is the stuff of reality TV and the daily news—and real life. Matthew 5:21-44

2. This is the reality of the Kingdom of God: **purity of heart, give to everyone who asks, the first is last and last first, walk the extra mile**, turn the other cheek, love your enemy and pray for those who curse and abuse you, you live for the audience of God alone, free from worry, free from judgment of others

3. **We are lost in need of a guide, a Teacher**, not only a brilliant one, but one **who lived out these truths** and realities of the Kingdom of God. Jesus lived and died according to the ways of the kingdom. Exemplified most powerfully when he interceded for his executioners...*“father forgive them.”*

4. **Jesus teaches us the ways of the Kingdom through discipleship to him**, we actually become the kind of people who naturally live by the principles of the Kingdom of God ‘the rhythm of grace.’ It is no coincidence that after announcing the availability of the Kingdom, Jesus called disciples to follow him, Matthew 4:18-22, to learn his ways and become like him and then they were to go do the same.

Session III—Discipleship, God’s gift to us!

A. So the greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as “Christians” will become disciples—students, apprentices, practitioners—of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of Heavens into every corner of human existence. Will they break out of the churches to be the Church—to be, without human force or violence, his mighty force for

good on earth, drawing the churches after them toward the eternal purposes of God? And, on its own scale, there is no greater issue facing the individual human being, Christian or not. -Dallas Willard

1. The term disciple occurs **269 times** in the New Testament, and Christian is found only **3 times** and was first introduced to refer precisely to disciples of Jesus. The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ. **All of the assurances and benefits offered to humankind in the gospel evidently presuppose such a life and do not make realistic sense apart from it.**
2. **Apprentice vs. disciple**—Beyond the transfer of knowledge and behavior modification to character transformation
3. **Discipleship defined: as being with Jesus to learn from Jesus how to be like Jesus**, to be his apprentices. We have chosen the term apprenticeship not because we are opposed to discipleship, but we seek to delve deeper than what is commonly understood in the Church as discipleship. Apprenticeship refers to a relationship in which an apprentice is learning a skill or trade from a master through close observation and interaction. This close interaction better describes the relationship we are to have with Jesus—being with him to learn from him. He is the master, we are the apprentices. In addition, the objective of an apprentice is not to forever remain one. **They are learning from the master to become like the master.** Likewise, our aim as apprentices to Jesus, is not to remain as we are, but increasingly mature into the likeness of our master

B. The great Omission

1. The Last Command Jesus Gave the church before he ascended to heaven was the Great Commission, the call for Christians to “make disciples of all the nations.” **But Christians have responded by making “Christians,” not “disciples.”**
2. But in place of Christ’s plan, historical drift has substituted “Make converts (to a particular ‘faith and practice’) and baptize them into church membership.” This causes two great omissions from the Great Commission to stand out. Most important, we start by omitting **the making of disciples and enrolling people as Christ’s students**, when we should let all else wait for that. Then we also omit, of necessity, the step of taking our **converts through training that will bring them ever-increasingly to do what Jesus directed.**
3. These **two great omissions** are connected in practice into one whole. Not having made our converts disciples, it is impossible for us to teach them how to live as Christ lived and taught (Luke 14:26). That was not part of the package, not what they converted to. **When confronted with the example and teaching of Christ the response today is less one of rebellion or rejection than one of puzzlement:** How do we relate to these? What have they to do with us? Isn’t this bait and switch?

C. Discipleship Then

- 1) He invited them to follow Him and travel with Him as He proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven & manifested its presence through healings & miracles. (*Matthew 4:18-22, 8:23, Mark 6:1, John 2:12*)
- 2) He taught them, when they were in the synagogue (*Mark 6:1*), among crowds of people (*Matthew 5:1-7:27*), but also privately (*Matthew 13:36, Mark 9:28, John 13:1-17:26*)
- 3) He attended the synagogue with them, (*Mark 1:21, Mark 6:1-2*), demonstrating the importance of learning the Scriptures, prayer, worship and fellowship within a community.
- 4) He shared meals with them, (*Matthew 9:10*), even the most significant meal known among His people (*Matthew 26:20*).
- 5) He sent them out to minister among the people – to proclaim His message and manifest the presence and power of His Kingdom. (*Matthew 10:1, Mark 3:14-15*)
- 6) He invited them to withdraw with Him for rest. (*Mark 6:31*)

D. Jewish Roots of Discipleship

- 1. Disciples regarded their teachers (rabbis) more highly than their own fathers.** Early rabbinic literature teaches that “When one is searching for the lost property both of his father and his teacher, his teacher’s loss takes precedence over that of his father since his father brought him only into the life of this world, whereas his teacher, who taught him wisdom, has brought him into the life of the World to come.” Compare with *Luke 14:26* and *Matthew 10:37*.
- 2. Disciples regarded themselves as servants and their teachers as masters.** This position of submission and total obedience and dedication to the rabbi was known as taking on the yoke of the rabbi. *Matthew 10:24*, *Matthew 11:28-30*.
- 3. The rabbi was called the father and his disciples were called his “family.”** This close knit fellowship led to the rabbi’s family of disciples being referred to as his “house.” Such terminology is documented in the Jewish book, the Talmud, which refers to the disputes and disagreements between the House (Disciples) of Hillel and the House of Shammai, two famous Jewish sages near the time of Jesus. Jesus warned his disciples that “if they persecute the master of the house (himself), how much more will they malign those of his household.” *Matthew 10:25b*
- 4. Disciples would leave family and home to be with their rabbi.** *Talmidim* were encouraged to, “Cover yourself with the dust of the sages or rabbis,” a saying that demonstrated the closeness which was to define the rabbi/disciple relationship. The Gospels clearly demonstrate what Jesus’ first disciples left to be with him. *Matthew 4:18-22*, *Matthew 19:27*.
- 5. The expectation for the disciple was that they would become like their rabbi.** Disciples wanted to become like their rabbi because they saw their rabbi as someone who was wise, good and living a godly life, one worthy of learning from. Through close observation, they would seek to learn from their rabbi how to keep the commandments, pray, fast, give alms and even, eat and drink. *Matthew 10:24-25*, *Luke 5:30-33*, *Luke 6:40*, *John 13:13-15*.

As seen from the above mentioned Gospel references, Jesus’ practice of discipleship was very much rooted in the Jewish context in which he ministered. The Gospels reveal further characteristics of the relationship Jesus had with his disciples.

E. Discipleship Now

- 1. Though costly, discipleship once had a very clear, straightforward meaning. The mechanics are not the same today.** We cannot literally be with him in the same way as his first disciples could. **But the priorities and intentions**—the heart or inner attitudes—of disciples **are forever the same**. In the heart of a disciple **there is a desire**, and **there is a decision** or settled intent. Having come to some understanding of what it means, and thus having “counted up the costs,” the disciple of Christ desires above all else to be like him. Thus, **“it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher”** (Matthew 10:25) And moreover, **“everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher”** (Luke 6:40)
- 2. Given this desire, usually produced by the lives and words of those already in the Way, there is still a decision to be made: the decision to devote oneself to becoming like Christ. The disciple is one who, intent upon becoming Christ-like and so dwelling in his “faith and practices,” systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs to that end.** By these decisions and actions, even today, one enrolls in Christ’s training, becomes his pupil or disciple. There is no other way. We must keep this in mind should we, as disciples decide to make disciples.
- 3. In contrast, the non-disciple, whether inside or outside the church, has something “more important” to do or undertake than to become like Jesus Christ.** He or she has “bought a piece of land,” perhaps, or even five yoke of oxen, or has taken a spouse (Luke 14:18,19). Such lame excuses only reveal that **something on that**

dreary list of security, reputation, wealth, power, sensual indulgence, or mere distraction and numbness, still retain his or her ultimate allegiance...

4. A mind cluttered by excuses may make a mystery out of discipleship or it may see it as something to be dreaded. **But there is no mystery about desiring and intending to be like someone—that is a very common thing.** And if we really do intend to be like Christ, that will be obvious to every thoughtful person around us as well as to ourselves. Of course, **attitudes that define the disciple cannot be realized today by leaving family and business to accompany Jesus on his travels about the countryside. But discipleship can be made concrete by actively learning how to love our enemies, bless those who curse us,** walk the second mile with an oppressor—in general, living out the gracious inward transformation of faith, hope, and love. Such acts—carried out by the disciplined person with manifest grace, peace, and joy—make discipleship no less tangible and shocking today than were those desertions of long ago. Anyone who will enter into the Way can verify this, and he or she will at the same time prove that discipleship is far from dreadful.

F. Why choose to be a disciple?—what would have to be true about Jesus?

What would be the thinking, the convictions about reality, that would lead someone to choose discipleship (apprenticeship) to him (Jesus)?" Dallas Willard writes, "Obviously one would feel great admiration and love, would really believe that Jesus is the most magnificent person who has ever lived. One would be quite sure that to belong to him, to be taken into what he is doing throughout this world so that what he is doing becomes your life, is the greatest opportunity one will ever have.

1. As Jesus' disciple, **I am his apprentice in kingdom living.** I am learning from him how to lead my life in the Kingdom of the Heavens as he would lead my life if he were I. It is my faith in him that led me to become his disciple. **My confidence in him simply means that I believe that he is right about everything: that all that he is and says shows what life is at its best, what it was intended by God to be.** "In him was life and the life was the light of men." -John 1:4

2. Being his apprentice is, therefore, not a matter of special "religious" activities, **BUT an orientation and quality of my entire existence.** This is what is meant by Jesus when he says that those who do not forsake all cannot be his disciple. (Luke 14:26 & 33) The emphasis is upon the all. There must be **nothing** held of greater value than Jesus and his kingdom. He must be clearly seen as the most important thing in human life, **and being his apprentice as the greatest opportunity any human being ever has.**

3. And as a disciple of Jesus I am with him, by choice and by grace, learning from him how to live in the kingdom of God. This is the crucial idea. That means how to live within the range of God's effective will, his life flowing through mine. Another important way of putting this is to say that I am learning from Jesus to live my life as he would live if he were I. **I am not necessarily learning to do everything he did, but I am learning how to do everything I do in the manner in which he did all that he did.** To repeat, I am learning from Jesus how to **lead my life, my whole life, my real life.** Note, please, **I am NOT** learning from him how to lead **HIS** life. His life on earth was a transcendently wonderful one. But it has now been led. Neither I nor anyone else, even himself, will ever lead it again. And he is, in any case, interested in my life, that very existence that is me. There lies my need. I need to be able to lead my life as he would lead it if he were I.

G. Having a Plan

1. The crucial thing is that, as disciples, **we have a plan for carrying out the decision we have made to devote ourselves to becoming like our Master and Lord**—to increasingly living in the character and power of Christ. Disciples are those who, seriously intending to become like Jesus from the inside out, systematically and progressively rearrange their affairs to that end, under the guidance of the Word and the Spirit. That is how the disciple lives.

2. **No one goes sadly, reluctantly into discipleship with Jesus.** As he said, "No one who looks back after putting his hand to the plough is suited to the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). No one goes in bemoaning the cost. They understand the opportunity. And one of the things that has most obstructed the path of discipleship in our Christian culture today is this idea that it will be a terribly difficult thing that will certainly ruin your life. A typical and often-told story in Christian circles is of those who have refused to surrender their lives to God for fear he would "send them to Africa as missionaries."

3. And here is the whole point of the much misunderstood teachings of Luke 14. There Jesus famously says one must "hate" all one's family members and one's own life also, must take one's cross and must forsake all one owns or one "cannot be my disciple." **The entire point of this passage is that as long as one thinks anything may really be more valuable than fellowship with Jesus in his kingdom, one cannot learn from him.** People who have not gotten the basic facts about their life straight will not do the things that make learning from Jesus possible and will never be able to understand the basic points in the lessons to be learned.

4. What this passage in Luke is about is *clarity*. It is not about misery or about some incredibly dreadful price that one must pay to be Jesus' apprentice. **There is no such thing as a dreadful price for the "pearl" in question.** Suffering for him is actually something we rejoice to be counted worthy of (Acts 5:41; Phil. 1:29). The point is simply that **unless we clearly see the superiority of what we receive as his students over every other thing that might be valued, we cannot succeed in our discipleship to him.** We will not be able to do the things required to learn his lessons and move ever deeper into a life that is his kingdom.

5. **But the final step in becoming a disciple is decision.** We become a life student of Jesus by deciding. When we have achieved clarity on "the costs" -- on what is gained and what is lost by becoming or failing to become his apprentice -- an effective decision is then possible. **But still it must be made. It will not just happen. We do not drift into discipleship.**

6. But in the last analysis **we fail to be disciples only because we do not decide to be.** We do not *intend* to be disciples. It is the power of the decision and the intention over our life that is missing. We should apprentice ourselves to Jesus in a solemn moment, and we should let those around us know that we have done so.