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1 Peter 2:9-10 (ESV) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Today we are going to go into the purpose of our identity. If you ask an average person about their purpose of life. They will say to be happy. If you look at the American Constitution, they will actually say, you actually have to have the pursuit of happiness. Other people say, important thing in life is not really happiness, it is actually meaning in life.

### What is happiness?

Feeling good, life is easy, good physical health, money to buy, lack or stress or worry, these are the traditional ideas of what happiness is and to a large extent all of us seek that. It is actually a physiological drive, which you actually have to satisfy.

There is a difference between us and an orangutan. The difference is, we actually need meaning and purpose, while an orangutan just has his satisfaction of drives. Satisfaction of drives is an emotion that is felt here and now, whereas for human beings, our experience extends beyond happiness. We actually have this issue of meaning and purpose which transcends your self. It is bigger than your self and it connects the past, the present and the future. If you are actually looking at happiness. I am happy now, tomorrow I am not happy, I must be happy so I just get a fix basically. Whereas meaning is something that you actually have that actually links the past to the present and to the future. Very-very important, it is something very uniquely human. So Winston Churchill says, *"It is not important to have lived, we should be determined to live for something"*

So meaning of life is important. In fact, if you look at meaning of life we look at some elderly people. Look at some scientific studies on elderly people. There is a study in the UK Britain, it is called the English Longitudinal Ageing Study. They looked at 7300 adults over the age of 50 (the mean age was 67.2). Every two years they would be interviewed and medical tests would be done. Actually what they do is they rate their meaning in life as a worthwhile score. So actually the worthwhile

score was quite good. The average worthwhile score was 7.41 out of 10. They look at the correlation between the worthwhile scores and other modalities. So the ones who have more worthwhile scores or meaning in life has stronger personal relationships, broader social engagements, more cultural activity and volunteering, felt less lonely, better mental health and better physical health.

On the contrary, if you look at the other opposite of why people don't want to live, you look at veterans who are basically in the UK and they basically have depression. So, 110 depressed veterans' diagnostic interviews and self-report questionnaires and they actually found their life meaning is associated with suicidal ideation among depressed veterans. So the ones who are depressed, didn't have and basically when they were suicidal it was associated with a lack of meaning in life.

So these actually tells you how important meaning is. If you look at famous people, Sir Terry Pratchett for example and he says, "*My meaning in life is to fulfil your potential. If you know fully the meaning of life is to find your gift. To find your gift is happiness. If you don't find it, it is a misery.*"

Maya Angelou, first female black director in the US. She says, '*I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.*' So, for her giving is the meaning of life.

If you look at Steven Pinker, who is a professor of psychology in Harvard University. His idea is moral goodness, "*Morality is not just any old topic in psychology but close to our conception of the meaning of life.*"

Albert Einstein and his meaning of life is actually questioning the world. "*The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.*"

So, everybody in the world who has ever been successful has to find some sort of meaning in their lives, because if you don't have that kind of meaning you are not an animal. Being an animal is just satisfy your desires and that's it. For each of above people, moral goodness, giving, fulfilling your potential, these concepts can touch the past, the present and the future. There is a line which you can draw and that actually brings in fulfilment.

Now if you look at a study on grandparents published in 2017 in Berlin, Germany. 516 grandparents interviewed and with two-year medical test between 1990 and 2009. They found out that the ones caring for their grandkids are the ones living a longer life.

So bottom-line is something about helping people. Meaning and happiness are not necessary the same thing. In the movie, 'Lion King'. Simba's father told him, "*Simba! Remember who you are. You are more than what you have become.*"

So we have an identity and the purpose is that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. The word is proclamation. In Greek the meaning is to divulge, publish, to declare and to celebrate. So proclamation is actually a response. It is not a directive; it is a response to something. When you see something, you respond to beauty and grace of who God is, you have no choice, you actually have to respond. God made us in His image and when we are made in his image, we have got the three Rs. We actually are genetically primed to respond, to reflect and to represent God. This is what we are called to be.

When we are responding appropriately, happiness and meaning coincide and when happiness and meaning coincide you get joy. Joy is not necessarily happiness. You can actually have a life of meaning and joy but not necessarily happy. So what we are looking for is meaning and happiness, it actually joins and is actually joy and basically the joy is basically given to us as the ultimate. Worship is our ultimate response of our church to God. Why do we worship? Let me give you a couple of questions that I got from John Piper.

Question: Why did God create us?

Isaiah 43:7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Question: Why did God choose a people for himself and make Israel his possession??

Jeremiah 13:11 (ESV) For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not listen.

**They for created for his glory**

Question: Why did God rescue them from bondage in Egypt?

Psalms 106:8-9 (ESV) Yet he saved them for **his name's sake**, that he might make known his mighty power. 9 He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry,

Question: Why did God use his sovereign power to bring back his people from exile after punishing them for generations of sin?

Isaiah 48:9, 11 (ESV) For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you,....11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it for how should my name be profaned? **My glory** I will not give to another.

Question: Why did the Son of God come to earth and to his final decisive hour?

John 17:1 "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the **Son may glorify you**,

Question: Why did the Son of God come to earth and to his final decisive hour?

2 Thess 1:9-10 "[He will come] on that day *to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at in all who have believed...*"

Is God a millennial. Why does God exist? What is the chief end of God? Is God self-centred or insecure? Why everything is about him, as if God is a millennial. Now the question can be answered very simply,

What could God give us to enjoy that would show him most loving?

Let me give you an example to answer this. Now suppose you actually have a football team QPR which is owned by Tony Fernandez. So, if QPR wins, Tony Fernandez gets glory. Supposing they had a big game, the most loving thing Tony who is also the best player in the world can do is to play also with them. So in a sense that's what worship is. The most valuable player in the world is actually God and God gives you the most beautiful present in the world, that's him. So that's why when we actually look at this idea of everything for the glory of God, it isn't because he is so self-centred, so full of himself, actually it is the most loving thing you can do, is to give himself to us and for us to discover how beautiful he is. He is a God that creates beauty, that every part of his creation actually reflects beauty and responds to beauty.

Dr Jeffrey Schloss is a former atheist and he basically is a professor of biology at Westmont College and he actually wrote in an article of Christianity today. When he was an atheist before and he saw the beautiful sunset and beauty of nature. This is what he wrote,

*'This is so beautiful. There's something there that I don't yet have and I don't yet see.' And I think that was Jesus," he says. "I wanted to be grateful, but I didn't have anybody to be grateful to."*

So you have got to see and take in the beautiful sunset and beautiful beach and lake and then you just want to shout out something, because we are designed to respond to beauty. We are actually made to respond to beauty and he didn't know looking at the sunset that this beauty was Jesus. He wanted to be grateful but didn't know anybody to be grateful to. C.S. Lewis writes,

*I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of complement that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are, the delight is incomplete till it is expressed.*

So basically what he is saying is that we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but it completes the enjoyment.

Ray Charles writes,

*He never understood all of the “whooping and hollering” that he saw people engage in, in church. But then, in his twilight years, he said, he now understood, that it wasn’t God who needed to hear the “whooping and hollering,” but it was we who needed to do it – to praise something or someone greater than ourselves – and that doing so is a normal part of the human experience.*

So, praise not merely expresses but it completes the enjoyment. It is an appointed consummation, just like writing of a love letter, singing or responding to something beautiful, it is actually praise and worship. So, we all praise something, we have to worship something. C.S. Lewis writes,

*Where men are forbidden to honour a king they honour millionaires, athletes or film-stars instead: even famous prostitutes or gangsters. For spiritual nature, like bodily nature, will be served; deny it food and it will gobble poison.*

So what he is saying is that, it is in our nature to worship. It is our nature to honour. Jeremiah says,

**Jeremiah 10:5 (ESV) Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good.” ....8 (ESV) They are both stupid and foolish; the instruction of idols is but wood!**

In fact, nowadays as we are going into the tech world, we are going to have an AI god. Anthony Lewandoski, former head of Uber’s self-driving program says,

*“To develop and promote the realization of a Godhead based on artificial intelligence and through understanding and worship of the Godhead contribute to the betterment of society.”*

They believe with artificial intelligence, by the time 2040, you would have more information and knowledge than the 7 billion people in the world together. Using that you could actually create an AI god. In fact, Vincent Lynch from California has an AI program which type I multiple verses in the Bible and then the AI will write its own Bible and this is a sample,

*“And let thy companies deliver thee; but will with mine own arm save them: even unto this land, from the kingdom of heaven.”*

So, AI can mimic Bible language in a sense. So, AI would provide the information we need for our daily lives. It would parse this information for us and enlighten us in

ways that might seem familiar to anyone who practices religion, such as Christianity. In terms of extending what God would do way back then to what God would do today.

So what AI will do is that, look through all the Bible verses and tell you what God did in the past and using AI predict what will God do in the future. So therefore, if you worship the AI god, then you would be able to predict the stock market, you would be able to live longer and all that as it were. But Jeremiah says,

Jeremiah 10:14-15 (ESV) Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them. 15 They are worthless, a work of delusion; at the time of their punishment they shall perish.

Jeremiah 10:11-12 (ESV) Thus shall you say to them: "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens." 12 It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.

AI never created the world; AI is a creation of man. They are confusing the role of God. They think God is an agent to mark out a path to success, while God is somebody we would respond to in terms of worship. So what is worship? Worship is a response to who God is and what He has done for us?

you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Romans 12:1 (ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Worship is basically a lifestyle promoting the glory of God. So, the whole universe is about God. How you live is to promote God's glory, and so therefore when you talk about missions, it is not the great commission, nor is the great suggestion. Mission is basically an extension of our worship. If you look at Genesis 1

Genesis 1:28 (ESV) And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

Genesis 12:1-3 (ESV) Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will

be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

So, God intends that every corner of the world will worship him.

Isaiah 49:6 (ESV) He says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

So, the goal of mission is to promote God's glory in the nations and worship will always result in missions. Mission must always produce worship. So if you are worshipping and you love God and you are responding to God then you want people everywhere in the world to worship God together. Our motivation is that,

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

This is actually taken from the prophecy of Hosea. So basically the people who had not mercy before, God will have mercy and this describes not only the apostate Israel, it describes all of us. We are gentiles, we have not received mercy before and now we will receive mercy. So it is one thing looking at beauty far away but when the beauty comes to you.

What Jesus is saying, worship is actually the motivation for this, is actually God who is so beautiful and wonderful, when actually comes into your house and transforms you and that becomes the motivation of the worship that you actually have.

The motivation for us to worship and to spread the message is actually God's love. God's love always draws us in and always sends us out. It never stays. If God's love comes to you in your lives when you hear the message week after week in Gamma, the bottom-line is that it must result in you reaching out, because if you didn't reach out that's not the appropriate response, because good news and beauty is something to be shared. If you are really excited, you go and share, if you are not excited, you tell nobody about it.

In 1890 Mini and Ola Hanson from American went to the Kachin people in Burma. The king at that time told them that they are the most horrible people you will ever meet. They don't have their own written language. Within a few years, about 30 years, they actually translated and created 25000 words, New Testament translated in 1911 and in 1926 the Old Testament was translated. They spend their whole lives their and when they finished the whole bible, they wrote these words,

*"It is with heartfelt gratitude that I lay this work at the feet of my Master. I'm conscious of the defects of my work. I have tried to master Kachin, and make a*

*translation and intelligible to all. Pray with us, that our divine Master may bless this work to the salvation of the whole Kachin race."*

This work has tremendous implication. The vision in the end is the vision of Revelations 7. Our response has to be this vision,

Revelation 7:9-12 (ESV) After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

That should be front and centre when we wake up every morning. That should be what it is about. That vision should drive us because we are declaring the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once we had no mercy, now we actually have mercy. Not only that we proclaim but we also live the life.

1 Peter 2:11-12 (ESV) Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation

Here the proclamation of the worship is basically we are the chosen race, we have got a purpose to proclaim his excellencies and our lives to live out as a counterculture, sojourners and exiles in honourable conduct. If you look at here, how do we live in such a way to proclaim his excellencies.

This is how God looks at us, chosen race, royal priesthood. This is how the world should see us, aliens and strangers. We don't live like the world. We are to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul. So we live in a world where everybody's desires are out of control.

12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation

When they look at you, there are good works. There is change in character. It takes time, it is not overnight. Why are we seen as evil?

Because your good works show up bad behaviour



*John 3:20 (ESV) For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.*

So basically, they complain that Christians are always judging them. Just because you express a difference of opinion and because they have done evil.

### **You are committed to the truth**

*John 17:17-19 (ESV) 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.*

Whatever it is we are sticking to the truth and when you stick to the truth you are obviously going to get in trouble with the rest of the world around you.

### **Allergic reaction**

*2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (ESV) For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.*

To one group of people who are becoming Christians, you bring life, the other group you bring judgment. So therefore they don't like you at all.

### **They think we are stupid**

*1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV) For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

So, if they think it is wonderful that means they are already Christian.

The cross is something that is folly to a lot of people. The world outside us is compromising on a lot of things. Christians are not allowed to express their faith when it comes to their rights, on the other hand the LGBT community has rights.

Dr Mary Neal is an orthopaedic surgeon who went to kayaking in south American country. She was actually underneath a waterfall and that waterfall actually caused her to drown. She was without oxygen for 24 minutes. They managed to bring her up, she was totally purple, resuscitated her and she actually subsequently wrote her experience, how she was transported to heaven. But the important thing is that, it is that when she came back after 24 minutes of no oxygen at all, she actually had no loss of brain power. There was no stroke, there was nothing, she was completely well, which is actually a miracle on its own. She was giving a TEDTalk and she brought out a picture and what she said was very-very insightful. She showed a cup, which represents our time on earth and the two faces represent our true spiritual home. You could just focus on the cup but you will miss your true spiritual home or you could focus on your time on earth and you miss your true

spiritual home or you could focus on heaven and your time on earth would just be passing at time and you would have wasted the time.

She challenges us to look at both. The cup becomes more meaningful in the light of the two faces there. We have to live with our eye on both. Because the two faces extenuates the meaning of the cup. It forms the meaning of the cup. When we understand our true spiritual identity as the chosen race, then you will wake up to the great potential in your life, to how God is going to transform your life here in the light of what is going to come. If you are more aware of metaphysical things, problems become opportunities, love becomes the only thing that matters she writes and the door to experiencing God's presence in your daily life begins to open more profoundly and joy becomes something that is constant state, because wherever you live you look at this, you always look in the light of who we are, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. That is the challenge.

The Bible tells us, our true spiritual home, what we are really are and when we can see ourselves today in the light of what is going to happen in the future, then we would really know how to live.