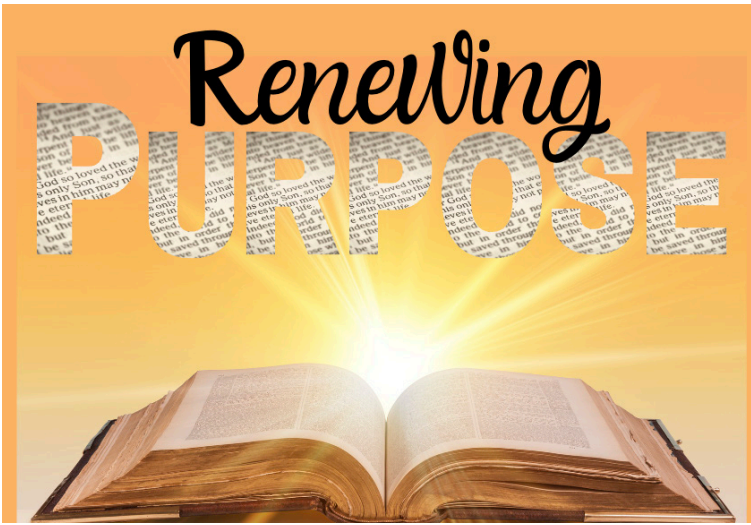


Renewing PURPOSE



Fall Sermon Series
Study Guide



Welcome to our six-session group experience on purpose. We are glad you are taking this journey! We believe that having—and renewing—a sense of purpose in our lives is crucial for our flourishing. It is what God desires for us. Living with a sense of purpose can be challenging in our world today. Yet when we are able to claim or renew a sense of purpose, it renews us.

These six sessions are meant to guide your group in reflection on purpose as you get to know one another better. While our Sunday morning message series will use the same weekly Scriptures and topics, these discussion questions are intended to help each participant deepen their understanding of each week's topic and grow in their relationship with fellow group members. Therefore, even if you have not heard the Sunday message, you will still be able to take part in these group sessions. (Note: if you would like to watch previous messages, you may find them at www.springfieldfirst.org.)

So whether you feel like you are truly living out your purpose, or whether you feel like you need to gain a greater sense of purpose, we hope this experience will encourage you to take the next steps toward that end.

SESSION 1



A SENSE OF PURPOSE

Scripture: Ephesians 2:10

Sermon Notes:

We all have heard that we are created for a purpose. Over two decades ago, *The Purpose Driven Life*, by Rick Warren, was released. It became an instant bestseller. Since then, many other books have been published with the intent of helping people discover their God-given purpose. In a signature verse in Ephesians 2, the Apostle Paul says, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (vs. 10).

1. Think back to when you were a kid. What did you want to be when you grew up? Are you now doing what you wanted to as a kid?
2. How have your interests changed over time?
3. What do you enjoy doing that expresses your unique creativity?

4. What is something that you do that you find immense joy and satisfaction in doing?

5. How does Christian faith play a factor or role in what you do?

6. Paul says, "We are God's masterpiece (or workmanship), created in Christ Jesus for good works." What does this verse mean to you?

7. Does God have one singular purpose for us in our lives? Or, is purpose discovered and lived out in many facets or areas in our lives?

8. How does purpose inspire and/or renew us on a daily basis?

9. When adversity strikes or some form of suffering occurs, how can our purpose and calling help us to regain our sense of stability and hope? How have you experienced this truth in your own life?

SESSION 2



ROUTES AND REROUTES TO PURPOSE

Scripture: Acts 9:1-19

Sermon Notes:

This week's focus is on finding purpose by unexpected paths. Our text is from Acts 9:1-19, the story of Saul's conversion. Saul—who later became known as Paul—experienced a major rerouting of his life when Jesus came to him. Paul finds the better path for his life.

1. Have you ever tried to give directions to someone and it did not work (they got lost)?
2. Think of a time when you got lost somewhere. How did you find your way? Did you stop and ask for directions?
3. When traveling today, do you use GPS? Can you think of a memorable time you were “rerouted” by GPS to your destination? Or when flying, have you ever been rerouted?

4. When you were younger, did you map out your life's plans? If so, how much of your life has been what you planned?

5. In Acts 9, Saul sets out on a journey to Damascus in order to persecute followers of Jesus in that city. And his plans change dramatically when Jesus shows up in his life. In Acts 9:3-9, notice what things Saul experienced. Which do you think was hardest for Saul to deal with?

6. Starting in verse 10, we learn of a man named Ananias, who was told to go find Saul. What was his first reaction upon getting this request? Can you recall a time when you had to carry out a hard task and it went well?

7. What happens to Saul when Ananias meets him?

8. Saul arrives in Damascus, his original intended destination, but his entire journey has changed. He was rerouted and put on a new path. He is given a new purpose. Have you ever found a sense of blessing in your life through a path you did not expect?

9. What are some ways we can encourage others who are experiencing big changes in their lives?

SESSION 3



WHEN PURPOSE CHANGES

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Sermon Notes:

Leaders write and speak on discovering your “why” or purpose. But very few address the shifting of purpose when there are life transitions. The disciples were fishermen, but Jesus called them to be “fishers of people.” Their purpose shifted.

1. Tell of a time in your life when your purpose shifted.
Describe the direction that your life took and how it made you feel.
2. What is the most challenging aspect of changing jobs or switching careers?
3. Did you discover a greater degree of purpose when you changed a job or began a new volunteer or paid venture?

4. From your experiences at church, think of a time when someone saw a talent or gift in you and encouraged you to serve in a particular ministry in the life of the church, or even outside of the church. How did that change you? Did you discover a larger or higher purpose?

5. Why are we sometimes reluctant to shift or adapt to a new opportunity that is presented to us?

6. How do the disciples react to Jesus' invitation to be fishers of people? (See Luke 5:10-11.)

7. What was so compelling about Jesus' invitation that it caused the disciples to leave everything and follow Jesus?

8. How can we see our earthly vocation in light of Jesus' calling to each of us to be fishers of people?

9. It is sometimes challenging to live out our calling and purpose. How can we move into our calling and purpose with greater confidence and joy?

SESSION 4



LIVING BELOW OUR PURPOSE

Scripture: The Story of Saul

Sermon Notes:

3. The story of King Saul reveals how some of his own character flaws led to destruction later on. Do you think leaders today value character? What are the best ways to have character formed in a person?

4. Notice in 1 Samuel 11:15 how the people rejoiced greatly in Saul being named king. Things begin well. People often support new leaders at first, but then their support tends to wane over time. Why do you think this happens?

5. In 1 Samuel 13:11-15, Saul makes a major mistake. In a high stress and demanding situation, he grows impatient while waiting for Samuel to join him, and he hastily makes an unlawful sacrifice to the Lord. What consequences are given in verse 14 regarding Saul's actions?

6. How can impatience lead us down the wrong path? How can it distract us from our purpose?

7. Slowly, Saul's servant David grows in power and fame, making Saul jealous (2 Samuel 18:29-30). Saul seeks to kill David more than once but never succeeds. Saul no longer cares about leading the people, but only about retaining his power and killing David. In what ways can jealousy of someone else lead us to live below our purpose?

8. How do we determine that we are living below our purpose?

9. How does God offer us hope if we ever sense we have wandered from our purpose?

SESSION 5



PURPOSE AND GIFTS

Scripture: Romans 12:1-11

Supporting Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
Ephesians 4:11-16

Sermon Notes:

This week's focus is upon discovering our spiritual gifts and passions as it relates to renewing our purpose. We find renewed purpose as we utilize our giftedness in serving others. As Christ-followers, we are connected to each other and find a sense of shared interdependence as we relate to one another.

1. What are your top three spiritual gifts? Did spiritual gifts testing confirm what you already knew were your gifts? Or, did the testing reveal to you for the first time what your spiritual gifts are?
2. Besides taking an inventory, what are some other ways a person can discover their spiritual gifts? Can we discover our gifts by attempting different ministries?
3. How do you respond when you're asked to serve in an area that you are not gifted in or strong at?

4. When was the last time that someone saw a gift in you and encouraged you to use it? How did that make you feel? How can you encourage someone else to utilize a gift or gifts that they have but aren't currently using?

5. All gifts are important. There are no inferior spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ. In fact, Paul says, "And the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor" (1 Corinthians 12:23). There are spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ that are highly visible, and there are many expressions of service that are behind the scenes. We need all to promote the health of the Body of Christ. How can we best encourage and affirm those who serve behind the scenes who desire no fanfare or recognition?

6. How does our shared purpose build up or strengthen the Body of Christ?

7. At the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 12:31, Paul says, “But eagerly desire the greater gifts.” Many have believed that Paul is referring here to the gift of Love (see 1 Corinthians 13). What does love have to do with utilizing our spiritual gifts?

8. How can we grow in love as we grow in service and ministry to others? How can we resist comparing our selves against others in the church that we think have greater talents and gifts than we have?

SESSION 6



OUR SHARED PURPOSE

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:4-27

Sermon Notes:

Purpose is not simply about us as individuals. As we grow in a sense of purpose, we also find the importance of being part of a community. Spiritual community in the church is a gift that allows us to carry out the mission Jesus gave to us. Here we discover a greater sense of a shared purpose.

1. Think back to a positive experience you have had being on a team or in a group. What made it so positive? What was it that gave you a sense of belonging?
2. Have you ever coached a team, led a group, or guided a community? What were some of the joys and struggles?
3. Can you think of a time when you experienced disunity among a group? What was your response?

4. How is finding unity a challenge today in our world? How are unity and purpose related?

5. In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul seeks to show how every member of the church is absolutely important for the life of the entire body. In verse 7, he states that individual gifts are given to people “for the common good.” How does serving others with our gifts increase in us a sense of purpose?

6. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-17, Paul wants us to see the metaphor of the “body” as an important way to understand the church. Do you find this metaphor helpful in describing the life of a community?

7. Has belonging to a community helped you find a sense of purpose in your life? If so, how?

8. True community in Christ is built on seeing each person as indispensable. How is this idea different from how the wider world today tends to value other people?

9. What do you think is the main purpose of the church today?

10. Optional—As we conclude this six-session experience, consider what actions you need to take toward a greater sense of purpose. If you are willing, share one “action step” with the group. How can others support you in this step?



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