

## Introduction:

"You are an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe."

- Dallas Willard

## Questions:

What is God's purpose for my life?

How do I discover my calling in life?

*<sup>1</sup> Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*

Acts 13:1-3

**Discovering your calling:**

**1. You are called to JESUS.**

Acts 9:1-18

Jesus' Invitation:

*<sup>28</sup> "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

Matthew 11:28-29

"The first purpose of your life or calling is to let God love you."

- Rick Warren

**You allow God to love you when you come to Him.**

**2. You are called to FAITHFULNESS.**

Acts 9:28-30, 11:25

Paul's silent years:

- Damascus/Arabia = 3 years
- Tarsus = 10 years

*"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."*

Luke 16:10

**It is the decisions you make in obscurity that will shape your destiny.**

Stay focused on the depth and let God be concerned about the fruit.

3. You are called to **FELLOWSHIP**.

Acts 13:1-3

*<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Hebrews 10:24-25

**Review:**

How do you discover God's calling for your life?

1. **CENTER** your life on Jesus.
2. Be **FAITHFUL** with what is in front of you.
3. **ENGAGE** in Holy Spirit directed community.

What is your next step?

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. According to Scripture, what is your purpose in life? Does your lifestyle reflect the purpose God has for you?
2. We often forget that God still works even when He seems silent. What did Paul do during the “silent years” of ministry? What is God calling you to do as you wait for His guidance and direction?
3. Hebrews 10:24-25 makes it very clear that fellowship is crucial in the body of Christ. How is God specifically calling you to be in fellowship with your church community?
4. Which of the three ways to “discover God’s calling on your life” do you struggle with the most? What steps will you take today to help you head in the right direction?

**Introduction: Paul and Barnabas 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey**

Acts 13:4-15:35

<sup>1</sup> Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." <sup>2</sup> This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. <sup>3</sup> The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them. <sup>5</sup> Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."

<sup>6</sup> The apostles and elders met to consider this question. <sup>7</sup> **After much discussion,** Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup> God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. <sup>9</sup> He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup> No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." <sup>12</sup> The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. <sup>13</sup> When they finished, James spoke up. "Brothers," he said, "listen to me. <sup>14</sup> Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles..."

... <sup>19</sup> "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. <sup>20</sup> Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. <sup>21</sup> For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

Acts 15:1-14, 19-21

**Three key observations on how we live a purpose filled life:**

1. In a word defined by the religion of **ME**,  
anchor yourself in the **HOUSE** and **FAMILY** of Jesus.
2. In a word of **SOUND BITE** theology,  
think deeply in **REFINING JESUS-CENTERED** community.
3. In a world paralyzed by **CHRONIC UNCERTAINTY**,  
do the next **RIGHT THING** in front of you.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. What steps will you take to anchor yourself in the house and family of Jesus?
2. What changes do you need to make in your life so that you can focus and dig deep in the Word of God?
3. How will you become a person who thinks deeply in refining Jesus-centered community?
4. What is the next right thing you need to do today?

**Introduction: How do you navigate disagreements as a follower of Jesus?**

*<sup>36</sup> Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." <sup>37</sup> Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, <sup>38</sup> but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. <sup>39</sup> They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, <sup>40</sup> but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup> He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.*

Acts 15:36-41

**Two observations on Paul and Barnabas' disagreement:**

1. The disagreement did not diminish the impact, but it expanded it.
2. The disagreement did not undermine future partnership and relationship.



**Three observations about conflict:**

1. Conflict is **UNAVOIDABLE**.
2. Conflict is **DIFFICULT**.
3. Conflict is an opportunity to **GROW**.

Proverbs 27:17

**Four steps to navigating disagreements well:**

1. Define the **PROBLEM** on your **OWN**.

- Examine your **HEART** and **PART**.

Matthew 7:3-5

- Move from **THINKING** about them to **PRAYING** for them.

Matthew 5:43-45

- Give a **GENEROUS** explanation for their **BEHAVIOR**.

Philippians 4:8

Just after we observe what others do and just before we feel some emotion about it, we tell ourselves a story. We add meaning to the action we observed. We make a guess at the motive driving the behavior. Why were they doing that? We also add judgment—is that good or bad? And then, based on these thoughts or stories, our body responds with an emotion.

- If necessary, seek **WISE COUNSEL**.

Proverbs 15:22

2. Set up a time to TALK; don't put it OFF.

- Face to FACE.
- Sooner than LATER.

Ephesians 4:26  
Matthew 5:23-24  
Romans 12:18

3. Address the PROBLEM; don't attack the PERSON.

- Be specific: focus on ONE issue, not MANY issues.
- Language matters: speak the TRUTH in LOVE.
- Seek RESOLUTION and extend FORGIVENESS.

Ephesians 4:14-16

Colossians 3:12-14

4. If stuck, seek OUTSIDE help.

Matthew 18:15-17

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. What new insight did you learn about Paul and Barnabas' disagreement in Acts 15:36-41? How can you apply this new knowledge to your current situation?
2. Take some time right now to examine your own heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of unconfessed sin.
3. Why is it so important to talk to someone face to face and talk to them sooner rather than later?
4. Which of the four steps to "navigating disagreements well" do you need to act on today?

**Introduction:**

“You are an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe.”

- Dallas Willard

**What is your definition of success?**

- Perfection
- Fame
- Approval
- Happiness
- Power
- Prosperity
- Impact

**Whatever your definition of success is will direct the very course of your life.**

<sup>16</sup> While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" <sup>20</sup> You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." <sup>21</sup> (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) <sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup> And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything. Rather, He Himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup> 'For in Him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring.' <sup>29</sup> "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead." <sup>32</sup> When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." <sup>33</sup> At that, Paul left the Council. <sup>34</sup> Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

Acts 17:16-34

“According to Jesus, success is becoming the person God calls you to become, and doing what God calls you to do—in his way, and according to his timetable.”

- Peter Scazzero

**How to redefine success:**

1. Be **PRESENT** where God has you **PLACED**. Acts 17:16-21

2. Only a **HOLY GOD** can **WHOLLY SATISFY**. Acts 17:22-31

3. Abandon **OUTCOMES** to God. Acts 17:32-34

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. Describe the differences between the world's definition of success and God's definition of success.
2. How can you be present in the place God has you right now?
3. Only God can fully satisfy. Is there anything or anyone other than God that you are trying to satisfy your soul with?
4. In what area of your life can you rest and entrust God with the outcome?

**Introduction:** How do you live a purposeful life through the difficulties of life?

The pathway of a purpose-filled life always involves difficulty.

**Paul's missionary journeys:**

**1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey**

Acts 13-14:28

**Date:** AD 47-49

**Companions:** Barnabas, John Mark

**Notable events:**

- Cyprus: Spiritual opposition from Elymas the Sorcerer
- Perga: John Mark deserts the team
- Antioch Pisidia: Jewish leaders drive Paul out of town
- Lystra: Paul is stoned and left for dead
- Antioch/Jerusalem: Internal opposition from Judaizers



**2nd missionary journey:**

Acts 15:36-18:22

**Date:** AD 49-51

**Companions:** Silas, Timothy, Luke, Priscilla & Aquila

**Notable Events:**

- Antioch Syria: Paul & Barnabas part ways
- Phrygia + Galatia: The Macedonian Call, kept by the Spirit from going to Asia
- Philippi: Paul & Silas flogged and imprisoned
- Thessalonica: Jewish leader try to arrest Paul & Silas
- Berea: More opposition from Jewish leader, Paul sent to Athens
- Corinth: Paul writes 1 & 2 Thessalonians; Jewish leaders try to arrest Paul

**3rd missionary journey:**

Acts 18:23-21:16

**Date:** AD 52-57

**Companions:** Timothy, Luke, Others

**Notable Events:**

- Ephesus: Silversmiths riot over Paul's effectiveness in sharing the gospel
- Paul writes 1 Corinthians
- Macedonia + Greece: Paul writes 2 Corinthians & Romans
- Ptolemais: Prophet predicts Paul will be imprisoned in Jerusalem

**When life is difficult:**

- Get clear on your **PURPOSE** and don't be surprised by **SUFFERING**.

*<sup>10</sup> You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. <sup>12</sup> In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

2 Timothy 3:10-12

- Recognize suffering has a **PURPOSE** it is not **POINTLESS**.

*<sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

Romans 5:3-5

- Your God-given **CALLING** is not limited by your **CIRCUMSTANCES**.

*<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. <sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.*

Philippians 1:12-14

- What's **AWAITING** you in Jesus is **WORTH** whatever you are going through.

*<sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. How do you typically respond to difficult circumstances? How does Paul's missionary journeys change your view on suffering and hardships?
2. When we lose sight of our "why", we lose sight of our purpose. Have you lost your "why"? Take some time right now to ask God to give you clarity on His purpose for your life. Write down what He's calling you to do.
3. Ryan mentioned four points on how to navigate a purpose filled life when life gets difficult. Which of these four points affected you the most and why?
4. Paul saw suffering and difficulty, not as a problem to solve, but an opportunity to be stewarded. How will you steward your current hardship or difficulty?