

What does the Bible Say?

Lesson 12: Our Purpose

In Lesson 11, we learned that we are saved by faith and not by our own righteousness. Our righteousness and salvation come through our faith. When we come to believe with all our heart that Jesus is the Son of God, that he was crucified, buried, and resurrected by the power of God for our sins, and we are ready to throw off our old life of sin and follow Jesus in a new life, we are ready to be baptized! In baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit and are given the assurance of our salvation. Just as Jesus crucified sin on the cross and buried it forever, the new follower of Jesus goes down into water, dying to their old life of sin and self. Washed in water, we are cleansed of sin by the blood of Jesus. Then, just as Jesus was raised from the dead, he raises us into a new life, now made pure and ready to be filled with the Holy Spirit!

Our New Life in Christ

Jesus tells his followers: "I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10, NIV). The life of a Christ follower is a rich and full life! Since we have been forgiven, we can celebrate all that the Lord has done for us by living a life of worshipping, serving, and loving Jesus alone in our times with him and together with other believers. We were once living for ourselves, but our purpose and desires is to live for him! Out of our growing love for Jesus, we begin loving, serving, and forgiving others, as we have been loved and forgiven. We stay close to Jesus through prayer, reading his Word, singing songs to him, learning and practicing his teachings, confessing our sins to God and to each other, and turning away from sin when we struggle. We find ourselves sharing the good things that Jesus is doing in and around us with other believers and with those who don't yet know Jesus. Alongside other believers, we learn how to put into practice Jesus's teachings and recognize Satan's lies. In all this, we praise Jesus for his love, grace, wonderful works, and miracles, and share with the nations this message of love, forgiveness, and power through Jesus. Now we can change our world by setting people free from the works of the devil! The Lord tells us we will suffer many things as his followers, just as he suffered. Yet, those who remain faithful to Jesus until the end enter a glorious eternal life full of peace, freedom, and love.

Share one area that has brought you tremendous joy so far in following Jesus.

Intimacy in Prayer

By now, we hope that you've been feeling closer to the Lord as you pray and share your heart with him. As we recall, Jesus, the Word of God, is not only our Father in heaven, but also our brother and spouse. He desires intimacy with us. He not only longs for us to speak to him, but he longs to speak with us, as a husband speaks to a wife and a wife to her husband. This intimate connection requires time and space.

Imagine the perfect marriage. How can a husband and wife grow in intimacy? What do their conversations look like?

Sometimes our minds are busy with problems or responsibilities in life. Creating space for the Lord often requires waking up early in the morning to have that special time. Jesus also felt this in his life, and to make that time, we see that "very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). Again, "at daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place" (Luke 4:42), and he "often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" (Luke 5:16). In other words,

we need quiet time and space to connect deeply to our God. To grow in creating this space, we recommend the study [Silence in Prayer](#).

Talk about the schedule and rhythms of your life. How do you find that solitary space to be with the Lord? What changes might you need to make to have this special time with him?

For many people, prayer is not a natural practice, but we can learn how to pray through the many examples in the Bible. We can learn how to worship the Lord by reading and praying through the Psalms ([Psalms of Praise](#)), as well as Old Testament books like Isaiah that record how the prophets worshipped. The book of Psalms records the prayers of David and the songs he sang to God during times of joy, sin, and suffering. Here we see David's worship and gratitude to the Lord, as well as his raw emotions of hurt, anger, and fear. But by the end of each Psalm, though, David finds his way back to worshipping and honoring the Lord. Many of the Old Testament prayers can be found in [Walking in Prayer: Old Testament](#), and you can use these prayers for guidance.

To enhance this time, many people use songs or even quiet music to help them connect to God. Below some of the Connect the Nations classes on our site, you'll see list of recommended songs for your worship times. You can also use quiet, instrumental music to quiet your mind and spirit before the Lord. You can worship the Lord through your favorite verses and share what you are thankful for. After a time of worship, you can share with Jesus your recent struggles, needs, and emotions, and ask the Lord for help and guidance. You can share your desires and visions of ways you want to see the Holy Spirit work in you and the lives of others. You can pray for the salvation and needs of family and friends, neighbors, and co-workers. You can pray for your city, state, nations, and other places around the world for the Lord to move in a mighty way! You can ask your friends and family members, "How can I be praying for you?" and keep a list of prayer requests. Be sure to record how your prayers are answered and be bold in asking the Lord to perform miracles for his glory! In all this, you can experience rich and meaningful times with Jesus as you pray with power in his name. To help you on your journey, an updated list of our prayer resources can be found on the [Experience](#) page of our website under Experiencing God through Prayer.

Describe your prayer life and share one area where you want to grow.

Intimacy in the Word

Prayer is a conversation, so it's important that we not only speak to God but also listen to his voice through his Word. Many people want to hear the voice of God, and yet we can all hear his voice every time we read his Word. Oftentimes, after an intimate time in prayer, we can experience the Lord speaking to us through the Bible as if he is speaking directly to us about the things we just spoke to him in prayer. Why is this? Well, we know that Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1-5, 14); so, when we read the Word of God, we are hearing the voice of Jesus! Hebrews 4:12 says, "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." In other words, Jesus is longing to speak to the deepest parts of our hearts, and he can use the Bible to do just that!

When we approach prayer and reading the Bible as a dialogue, our times with the Lord become rich, powerful, and meaningful for our lives and the lives of others. As we pray for others, you will see the Lord giving you stories and verses to share with others to strengthen them and offer direction for their struggles. Reading the Bible this way moves us beyond "informational" and into "relational," and we begin experiencing Jesus as the "Wonderful Counselor" (Isaiah 9:6) that he was designed to be in our lives.

We encourage you to buy a special journal or keep notes in your computer about what you receive in this time – a message of encouragement, direction, visions and revelations, and even tasks to do. Taking good notes will help you remember all that the Lord has spoken to you, what he desires for you to do, and all that he wants you to share with others in your life. Year after year, you can even go back to these words and see how the Lord has been moving in your life and shaping your journey!

Describe your relationship with God's Word, and share one area where you want to grow.

Intimacy in Relationships: The Church

As we read the Bible, we might notice the theme of God's kingdom. A kingdom has a king, people he rules and leads, and a territory where the king reigns and his citizens live. God has a kingdom in heaven, but he also has a kingdom on earth: his church where "He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy" (Colossians 1:18). The Bible calls Jesus's followers many names: his servants (Matthew 22:3), sons (Hebrews 2:10), his bride (Revelation 19:7-9), his sheep (John 10:27), priests (I Peter 2:9), saints or holy ones (I Corinthians 1:2), and friends (John 15:15). The church is the place where Jesus's followers assemble to learn more about Jesus and teachings, worship him, and share testimonies of God's goodness and power. Our first example of the church is found in Acts 2 where we can get an idea of how the first church met together and the purpose of those meetings:

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Go through each verse in this passage. What do you learn about the first church?

Where do you want to grow as a church? What role do you want to play in helping your church grow spiritually?

When we study the word "assembly" in the Old Testament, we see how important these meetings of God's people are to the Lord. From the beginning, God created the sun, moon, and stars to give us special times to worship him: "And God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years'" (Genesis 1:14). Even though our schedules are busy with friends, family, work, school, events, and society who may try to interrupt our times with the body of Christ, Jesus says, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). In this way, we know to set these sacred times of fellowship with other believers as a top priority, trusting that Jesus will provide the things we need.

Paul also says, ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ 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). Our presence with our brothers and sisters matters to God, for it is a time not only to be encouraged but also to encourage and strengthen others spiritually. During the week, we can also encourage each other through calls or text, serve the sick, help

a brother or a sister with a need, or just spend time together. We all have a role in making the church a warm and special place and including others in our relationships even outside of our regular times as a church (John 15:9-17). To help you to have a rich experience in church community, we offer an overview of church in the Bible in the class [Experience the First Church](#). We even offer a training class on starting and [Multiplying House Churches](#), which allows you to freely implement all that you are learning with your friends and family. In this class, you'll learn how churches started in the first century and more about God's dreams and plans for you and his church!

How do you see your value in the body of Christ? How do you want to grow in encouraging others?

Serving and Teaching

Whether you are in a large church or a house church, there are many ways that you can build up your church. Your church may have special roles for helping with the communion, serving in the children's ministry, reaching out to the community, teaching the Bible, leading a small group, or even training in ministry. Connect the Nations offers [The Kite Method](#), a course designed to teach you how to lead Bible discussion in church, small groups, or among friends. Connect the Nations places all of its resources online for you to freely use whether you are strengthening other believers or sharing your faith with those who don't yet know Jesus. In God's kingdom, everyone has a special role, for John said, "[Jesus] made us his kingdom and priests who serve God his Father (Revelation 1:6). Peter also said, "You also are like living stones, and God is using you to build a spiritual house. You are to serve God in this house as holy priests, offering him spiritual sacrifices that he will accept because of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5) As we learned in Lesson 10, we have all been given spiritual gifts as well to serve the Lord. So, it's important to ask the Lord how you can serve him and his church through these blessings he's given you.

How do you want to serve the Lord in and outside of the church? Talk about this also as a group.

Communion

Jesus asks his church to gather regularly to remember his sacrifice of his own body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins through a symbolic meal that we call the Lord's Supper or Communion (Luke 12:18-20). During this time, Christians drink a small amount of red wine or juice representing Christ's blood, as well as a small amount of bread that represents his body that died on a cross. During this time, the Christians also examine their hearts – their relationship with Jesus, relationship with others, struggles with sin, areas where we need to grow, or other ways we want to honor the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). This is a time to confess sins to God, renew our walk with the Lord, express our gratitude to Jesus, and celebrate his salvation, forgiveness, and grace! If there is sin that we need to confess, we can do that before or after this time of remembrance. To go deeper in your communion times with the Lord, we recommend the study [Transformational Communion](#). For resolving conflicts in the church, see Matthew 18:15-20. For all relational conflicts, we recommend our [Relationship Success](#) class.

Financial Giving

In the New Testament, we also see the believers sharing resources to help the believers in need and contribute to the work of the ministry and spreading the Gospel:

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them

all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

In the Jewish tradition, we see in the Bible that the Jewish people gave a tithe of all their possessions and income regularly to show gratitude and honor to God for his blessings. This money also went for the upkeep of the Temple and financial support for the priests. In the New Testament, we see radical generosity among believers to show love to the family of God and support the needs of the churches, church leaders, and missionaries who served in the spreading of the Gospel. We see that giving in the New Testament is not a requirement but an offering from the heart:

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (II Corinthians 9:7)

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. (Luke 12:33)

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. (II Corinthians 8:1-24)

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. (II Corinthians 16:2)

What was Jesus's heart and the heart of the believers about financial giving? How are you giving, or want to give, financially to the Lord's work?

Intimacy with the Spirit

While intimacy with the Spirit can occur in rich settings of worship, prayer, and the Word, we also need mental and physical awareness of the Spirit's voice. In other words, if we always have the TV on, we're constantly scrolling through our phones, we're overworked, or we struggle resting, then we may have a hard time hearing the Spirit speak to us. Hearing the Spirit's voice and direction requires a posture of listening and inner prayer. We might be in the middle of a crisis, but in our minds, we stop, pray to the Lord, ask for his direction, listen, and then the Spirit speaks. Developing a practice of listening can begin during our daily times of prayer, where we devote a few minutes or more to listening. The study [Silence in Prayer](#) focuses on developing this habit and is great study to help you build this skill. Just remember that the Holy Spirit is One with the Father and Jesus, the Word of God. So, he will never speak something that goes against the Word of God, nor will he misapply scripture. But Satan can and does. He tries to do this with Jesus when Jesus is hungry and fasting in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). For this reason, we need to read the Word of God often and know his Word well so that we can discern the voice of the Lord. We

must also not let our own desires become a voice we think is God's or lead us to misinterpret the Bible. If we're in doubt, we can ask a trusted friend or pastor to help us. But we can be confident that God's Word is our best source for hearing the Lord correctly and discerning when God is speaking to us.

We learned in Lesson 10 that the Holy Spirit brings us comfort, wisdom, and instruction, and he reminds us of all that Jesus did and taught. He wants to fill us with power from above and give us spiritual gifts that display his power. But in all this he has a purpose. Once we are strengthened in his love, power, and gifts, the Spirit sends us out into the world to love and comfort others, proclaim the truths of God, and confirm the message of Jesus through signs, wonders, and miracles. If we open our hearts and step out in faith, the Spirit will begin opening doors for us in all kinds of ways that we might make an eternal difference in the lives of the people he wants us to reach with his love and message.

When we're spending time with the Lord in prayer and the Word each morning, the Holy Spirit will lay on your heart and mind what he wants us to do that day; where he wants us to go; whom he wants us to meet, encourage, or love; and what we're to say or do when we speak to them. If we don't receive something specific during our morning time with him, we can go about our day with our eyes and ears open to the people around us and move toward the people we sense the Spirit wants us to encounter. As we reach out to the Spirit and his plans for our life, he may give us direction for other ways he wants us to connect with people through a ministry, event, opportunity, or service. Jeremiah 29 says that the Lord has "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future" (29:11). And the Lord wants to reveal those plans to us, for "surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). These revelations are birthed through our intimate times in prayer, the Word, community, and the Spirit!

Take a few minutes to listen for the Holy Spirit and empty your mind of distraction. Ask him to reveal his plans for you. Perhaps he wants to encourage you, give you instruction or direction, reveal who he wants you to reach or what he wants you to do. Write whatever you hear, see, or think and any pictures that come to your mind, even if they don't make sense. Share whatever you hear with others and discuss what you believe the Lord might be speaking to you individually and as a group.

We learned in Lessons 9 and 10 that the Spirit will lead us to "Go!" To prepare your mind and hearts for being sent into the world to share the message of Jesus, we've created the [Testify](#) section of our website to support you on your journey. This section is filled with tools, resources, classes, and testimonies that provide direction on how to share your faith and encourage you with stories of how Jesus is reaching people around the world with his love, power, and message. To get started, complete the class on [How to Share Jesus with Others](#), which will guide you through many of the resources we offer to support you. Be sure to share your own testimonies through our [Share a Testimony](#) portal so that you can encourage and strengthen others!

Intimacy in Suffering

You might have noticed that the purpose of our lives is not found in what we do, but it's to be intimately connected to our Lord and Savior. As we follow Jesus and commune with his Spirit, Jesus begins to fill us with his dreams and plans for our new life! We'll experience love like we've never experienced before, along with exciting plans and difficult challenges. If we recall in Genesis 3:15, we do have an adversary who will strike our heels, but we must crush his head through the power of the Holy Seed, Jesus. This is

why we need the Holy Spirit and his strength, courage, power, perseverance, and love to overcome all of Satan's schemes.

As we serve the Lord, sacrificing our time, energy, and resources, we will experience suffering. Suffering comes in many forms. We'll struggle in overcoming some sin and encounter the disobedience of believers and others who don't know Jesus. Perseverance, open communication, forgiveness, prayer, and the Word can help us to get through difficult seasons and reunite us with brothers and sisters in the kingdom. Since we live in the world, we and those we love will go through challenges of sickness, loss, financial difficulties, unfulfilled dreams, and all the challenges that the world brings. Jesus tells us in advance that we will face rejection and persecution from people who don't love God. One day, we may even face death for our faith (Matthew 24:9-11). As we get closer to the end times, we will face loneliness and emotional pain. Jesus warns us in advance but leaves us with hope:

⁹ "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 9)

How have you already been experiencing these things? How does Jesus encourage us? What does he want us to do?

The Father knows that these challenges will come, but he gives us this promise: "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5), and Jesus affirms this when he says, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine (John 15:4). Again, he encourages us with this: "¹⁰ Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.... ²⁶ To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations" (Revelation 2:10, 26). Paul also says, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs —heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Romans 8: 17). During our struggles, we fix our eyes on Jesus and remember his promises. Imagine yourself in]\the description of heaven that we read about in Revelation 21. Remember also that "they will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings —and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers (Revelation 17:14). This is our destiny and our promise from God!

This Week:

- Set up a curriculum of what your group wants to study over the next several weeks or months. Have everyone take turns teaching a class or a lesson from the Bible.
- Make a plan of how you will serve the church, encourage others, or reach out to others as a group this week.
- Take time this week each day in prayer, the Word, and listening to the Holy Spirit. Let him strengthen you and lead you each day in the things he wants you to focus on and do. Share what you learn with a friend, a believer or even someone who doesn't know Jesus yet.
- Pray about how you want to give sacrificially to the work of God's Kingdom.
- Sign up for the newsletter to receive news of new classes, resources, and events on our website.