

TWO

PURPOSE ABANDONED

25

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WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING WAY YOU'VE EVER USED DUCT TAPE?

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Most everyone owns a hammer, screwdriver, and pliers. In addition, most people have a roll of duct tape somewhere in their home. Duct tape is so valuable because of its versatility. It's incredibly sticky, durable, and even waterproof, so no matter what its original purpose was, duct tape is now used for everything from hanging pictures to fixing toilets. Sometimes we think of ourselves a lot like we think of duct tape. We have a variety of purposes and, if we really commit to something, we can find meaning in almost anything. The psalmist tells us something different—we have one purpose. But we've abandoned the reason we were created and chosen instead to focus on our own selfish ends. Only when we turn back to God and seek Him can we begin to live with purpose.

THE POINT

God created us with purpose, but our _____ keeps us from living out that purpose.

In Psalm 8, we find a description of who God is and what He has done. It's against this backdrop of the majesty and greatness of God that David, the psalm's author, puts all of mankind. In light of who God is and what He has done, David asks an introspective question: "What is a human being that you remember him, a son of man that you look after him?" (v. 4). Psalm 14 was also written by David. But in contrast to Psalm 8, it details how the godless reject God's law and oppress God's people.

Psalm 8:1-6 ¹ **LORD, our Lord, how magnificent is your name throughout the earth! You have covered the heavens with your majesty.** ² **From the mouths of infants and nursing babies, you have established a stronghold on account of your adversaries in order to silence the enemy and the avenger.** ³ **When I observe your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you set in place,** ⁴ **what is a human being that you remember him, a son of man that you look after him?** ⁵ **You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor.** ⁶ **You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:**

1) We were created to bring God _____ and _____.

David was forced to a humble posture when considering the greatness of God. It's only when we consider God's greatness that we find our true purpose. In Genesis, we find that mankind is unique in the vast array of God's creation—we alone were created in the image of God. This means we're to represent God on the

earth, operating in the same kind, loving, and purposeful way He does. As we do this in our families, workplaces, and communities, we bring God praise and glory and fulfill our reason for being.

ENGAGE

Take a few minutes to consider the wonders of God's creation as communicated in these verses and how they inspire awe. In the margin, describe your understanding of our purpose and position in relation to His creation.

Psalm 14:1-3 ¹ **The fool says in his heart, "There's no God." They are corrupt; they do vile deeds. There is no one who does good.** ² **The LORD looks down from heaven on the human race to see if there is one who is wise, one who seeks God.** ³ **All have turned away; all alike have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one.**

2) We have turned away from God and His _____ for us.

David was not only aware of the greatness of God, but he was also keenly aware of the fallenness of man. Though there's a wide and varied spectrum of people in the world, David groups all humanity together: "All"; "no one"; "not even one" (v. 3). In other words, there are no exceptions. Every human being has turned away from God and His purpose for us. No man, woman, or child can rightfully claim an exemption from this kind of appraisal because our sin isn't just a behavioral issue; it's a heart issue. We sin not just because we make wrong choices; we sin because we're sinners.

Psalm 14:4-7 ⁴ **Will evildoers never understand? They consume my people as they consume bread; they do not call on the LORD.** ⁵ **Then they will be filled with dread, for God is with those who are righteous.** ⁶ **You sinners frustrate the plans of the oppressed, but the LORD is his refuge.** ⁷ **Oh, that Israel's deliverance would come from Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.**

3) When we turn to God as our _____, He restores us.

There is good news against this backdrop of hopelessness. Despite our sin and rebellion, God loves us and is willing to receive us if we turn to Him. Though in our sin God is our judge, He is willing to become our refuge. It's only *in* God that we can receive refuge *from* God. Only when we turn to Him in faith can we escape the just judgment that comes as a result of our sin.

LIVE IT OUT

What actions will you take in response to today's study?

- **Reflect.** Take time to reflect on the fact that God has created you for His glory. Read Isaiah 42:5-8 and 43:6-7. Are you living your life for His glory or your own?
- **Confess.** In what part of your life is God revealing that you may be living apart from His purposes for you? Confess that to Him, repent, and thank Him for His forgiveness.
- **Forgive.** Share God's forgiveness with others. Is there someone who has hurt you? Ask God for the grace to forgive, even as He has forgiven you.

TALK IT OUT

Want to go a step further? Gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender. Read Psalm 8:1-6; 14:1-7, then use the following summary and questions for a deeper discussion.

"The meaning of life" is a topic that's been discussed, debated, and disagreed on for centuries. Nevertheless, it remains an essential topic for all kinds of philosophies and religions because there's a longing deep inside every human to answer the fundamental question: "Why am I here?"

Only the Bible has the answer. Until we recognize not only that we were created for God's glory but also that we've abandoned that purpose, we won't ever be able to find real purpose again. But if we're willing to acknowledge that both through our nature and our actions, we're living contrary to His purpose, we can begin to find God's desire and plan for our lives.

- ? **Where do you see people searching for purpose around you? What avenues do you see people going down to find purpose?**
- ◎ **Using a concordance, look up the word *glory* and take note of the number of times that word appears. Choose a sampling of passages to read together, then come up with your own definition.**
- ? **How would you share the good news of Jesus with someone from the perspective of finding real purpose and meaning in life?**

DAY 1: Freedom comes through living in the middle of real purpose and meaning.

Read Psalm 8:1-6.

Psalm 8 holds human beings in tension. It's a tension between the big and small, and it's an important tension because we can fool ourselves into either perspective. We can think of ourselves as way too big or way too small.

Sometimes we feel too small when we look at the world around us and see disease, war, hatred, and a host of other really big issues. Or we may feel small when we're confronted with big challenges at home, work, or church and don't know how to handle them.

Conversely, we sometimes feel too big. We feel big when we get a promotion or gain some measure of power, or when there's plenty of money in the bank and everything in life seems to be just right.

Psalm 8 gives us the picture of a mighty God, the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth. The One who has planned all things and frustrates even the vilest acts of evildoers for His glory. The One who moves the heart of any earthly king like a watercourse. The One who doesn't need any help from anyone, least of all of us. And yet, He's the One who has crowned the likes of us with glory and honor. He's made us His image-bearers, the stewards of creation, and, ultimately, the bearers of His great gospel in both word and deed. He's the One who doesn't need, and yet values, people like us.

There's a tremendous amount of freedom found in this tension. We're released from the pressure of doing everything for ourselves, but at the same time, we can embrace the opportunity to live in the middle of real purpose and meaning. Real freedom is found in a God who is strong, stable, and self-sufficient—the same God who gave His Son to save our souls.

? When have you felt too small? When have you felt too big? Write your thoughts in the margin and spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you find the freedom that comes with living in the middle of real purpose and meaning.

DAY 2: We were created for His glory.

Read Psalm 8:1-6.

Psalm 8 reminds us of our true purpose as human beings. We were created, first and foremost, to bring glory to God. But therein lies the struggle, doesn't it? We might object to this purpose because it makes God seem arrogant and needy, as if He was so insecure that He needed to create human beings to affirm Himself. This is wrong for two reasons:

- **It neglects the truth.** When we give glory to anything other than God, we are, in a sense, lying. That is, we're failing to understand what is of true and lasting value—what is truly praiseworthy—in the universe. The problem is, in our sin, our value system has been corrupted. We tend to ascribe undue honor and glory to things that don't really deserve it. But God isn't like that. He is perfect in all His ways and in all His attributes. In His perfection, God knows what's truly valuable, truly glorious, and truly praiseworthy in the universe. When we set our main priority as the glory of God, all we're really doing is acknowledging the truth.
- **It neglects God's love.** It's a loving thing for God to command us to seek His glory. That's because in doing so, He's refusing to allow us to settle for less rather than experiencing what is more. If the Lord didn't command us to worship and glorify Him, then He wouldn't be loving because He would be withholding from us the thing that can bring the greatest satisfaction, the greatest joy, the greatest purpose, and the greatest end in all eternity—Himself. God commands us to seek His glory because He's not content for us to settle for less than the best. It's because He loves us.

We were created for God's glory. When we embrace this great purpose and reject the smaller purposes that tend to occupy our attention, we find ourselves living out the greatest truth in the universe and at the same time experiencing the love of God.

- **Using the space in the margin, explain what being created for God's glory means to you. Include one practical step you can take this week to live that out.**

DAY 3: There are no exceptions.**Read Psalm 14:1-3.**

As human beings, we tend to make exceptions, especially when it comes to ourselves. We look at no trespassing notices, no food or drink signs, and even speed limit postings and consider those things to be optional. These are fine rules for everyone else, but we're somehow exceptional.

To a greater degree, we might be tempted to make exceptions when it comes to God as well. After all, we reason, we're pretty good people who have never really done anything that wrong. But when we turn to Psalm 14, the words are airtight:

- No one does good (v. 1)
- No one seeks God (v. 2)
- All have turned away from God (v. 3)

As difficult as it is to admit, we're among the "no ones" and the "alls." Coming to understand and accept this truth is a necessary step in finding our true purpose in life. We must first come to the end of ourselves and all our failed attempts to find meaning before we're ready to discover what we were truly made for.

This step of humility empties us of our pride, but then as empty vessels, we're positioned to be filled by something else. And unlike all those other pursuits, what fills us up when we're most empty is at last that which can truly satisfy.

? What exceptions do you need to let go of in order to embrace what you were truly made for? Spend time in prayer, asking God to help you see these things.

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Michael Kelley

DAY 4: The ultimate standard of good is God.

Read Psalm 14:1-3.

One of the reactions we might have when confronted with the all-encompassing nature of sin is that of comparison. We might, instead of being forced to our knees, raise our noses and look around us.

In truth, it's never been easier to compare ourselves to other people. It's no longer just a case of looking out the window. Instead, social media has given us a window into the world. We can constantly compare our kids, our vacations, and even our food. But the kind of comparison we're talking about here is specifically spiritual comparison—where we cast judgment on the good or bad of other people.

When we read Scripture text like Psalm 14, we might respond by acknowledging that of course we've made some mistakes, but surely, we're not as bad as someone else. The heart behind this type of comparison is self-justification. It's about proving to ourselves that we're okay because we're certainly not as bad as some other person.

There's probably a measure of truth in that. By the standards of society, we might not be as good or as bad as any number of people. The problem, though, is that we're comparing ourselves to the wrong standard.

This leads us to a fundamental question that's very important for us to answer: Is there an ultimate standard of good in the universe? If there is, then anything that detracts from that can't be called good. It must, in fact, be the opposite. The ultimate standard of good is God. Against that standard, no matter who else is standing next to us, we're not good. Not good at all.

? Does social media influence the way you measure “good”? Are there other standards of comparison that impact your perception? Consider taking a break from anything that tempts you to comparison and use that time to focus instead on the true standard of good—God.

A close-up photograph of a person's face, partially obscured by their hand. The person is holding a smartphone in their other hand, which is visible in the lower right. The word "FOCUS" is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white.

FOCUS

DAY 5: God is our refuge.

Read Psalm 14:4-7.

Psalm 14:6 contains an important and wonderfully encouraging word: “refuge.” This is good news! We have a place of strength and power to which we can turn. When the foundations of reality are shaking, there’s somewhere we can go to find peace and safety. But it’s also important to note that the very idea of needing a refuge implies a threat. The whole reason we need a safe place to begin with is because someone or something has made it unsafe for us.

The Lord might be our refuge, but our refuge from what?

It might be from any number of things. We might run to find safety and security in the Lord during financial distress, or a health scare, or relational turbulence in our lives. But there’s another threat—an even greater one—from which we need to find refuge.

We need a refuge in God because we’re all, as sinners, under the righteous judgment of God. Because God is a perfect judge, He is bound by His own character to dole out the judgment due for our sin. As Paul would later write in the book of Romans: “The wages of sin is death” (6:23a).

Where can we turn in such a hopeless situation? Where can we find safety? Where can we hide from Him who knows all, sees all, and holds all in His hands? Only in God Himself—no other refuge is strong enough. Paul continued his thought with the statement: “But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (v. 23b).

When we were enemies of God, He chose to become our refuge. He imposed His judgment at the cross so that we might be safe in His arms. When God was against us, He was also for us. So when we were running from Him, the only place for us to go was to Him.

The punishment of God, on God, has brought us peace. We can turn to Jesus—to God—and find refuge because He loves us.

🕒 **Spend time reading passages of Scripture that talk about the Lord as our refuge. Choose one to memorize this week.**