

THREE



PURPOSE
RESTORED

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Thanks to YouTube, HGTV, and other home improvement resources, one could think there's no longer a need for professional plumbers, electricians, and drywall experts. Though these resources may have boosted the confidence of would-be home repairers, the result is often an increase in halfway or poorly completed projects. Most of us still need an expert to do the job right. When it comes to restoring our purpose in life, this principle is even more true. There's only one way and one person through which our purpose can be restored.

THE POINT

Through Jesus, we can be forgiven and restored to the _____ for which He created us.

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, news of what had happened spread quickly, and the number of people believing the message of Jesus grew. In Acts 3, Peter and John came upon a beggar who was lame from birth. Though the man asked Peter and John for money, they responded with something better, and the man was healed in the name of Jesus. The healing caused quite a spectacle among the people at the temple that day, and Peter seized the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with the crowd.

Acts 3:14-18 ¹⁴ **You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer released to you.** ¹⁵ **You killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this.** ¹⁶ **By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Jesus has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.** ¹⁷ **“And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your leaders also did.** ¹⁸ **In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets—that his Messiah would suffer.**

1) Jesus _____ when we place our faith in Him.

For Peter, the miracle was a means to an end. Though the crowd wanted an explanation of how and why the lame man was dancing and praising God, Peter pointed out the soul-deep sickness that infected every onlooker. But he didn't stop there; just as the man was physically healed by faith, so also could every person be spiritually healed. Just as the man was physically restored, so also can we be restored when we place our faith in Jesus.

Acts 3:19-21 ¹⁹ **Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out,** ²⁰ **that seasons of refreshing may come from**

the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time of the restoration of all things, which God spoke about through his holy prophets from the beginning.

2) Jesus _____ and refreshes us when we repent of our sin.

Though our meaning and purpose as human beings have been lost, there's a definite and certain pathway back:

- **Repentance.** We must turn away from all else we've trusted in and put our faith in Jesus.
- **Forgiveness.** Jesus's forgiveness is available to all who turn to Him, and God delights in giving it.
- **Refreshment.** When we return humbly to God, acknowledging our sin and trusting in Him, we find the peace, satisfaction, and fulfillment that has eluded us despite our best efforts.

Acts 3:22-26 ²² Moses said: The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ And everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be completely cut off from the people. ²⁴ "In addition, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, have also foretold these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham, And all the families of the earth will be blessed through your offspring. ²⁶ God raised up his servant and sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways."

3) Only _____ can bring us back to God.

Though the pathway is clear, it's not negotiable. There isn't a shortcut or a way around; there aren't exceptions. No matter what our background, nationality, educational level, or previous religious experience, there's only one pathway back to God and a restored purpose in life. In an act of humility, we must submit ourselves to Jesus Christ, because only in Christ are we saved.

ENGAGE

This passage lays out several of the blessings that follow a genuine faith in Jesus. In the margin, list an area where you've had to repent recently, an area where you've received forgiveness and felt refreshed, and an area where you've experienced a restored purpose in your life. Take a moment to thank Jesus for these things.

LIVE IT OUT

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

- **Trust Jesus.** If you've never trusted Jesus for your salvation and purpose in life, do so now. Talk to a leader or pastor about your decision and next steps. There's also information inside the front cover of this book.
- **Remember.** Write in your journal ways you see God at work in your life. How have you grown? How has your faith deepened? How has life gotten better?
- **Share.** Tell at least one person this week about the changes God has brought about in your life. Invite this person to learn more about Jesus with you.

TALK IT OUT

Want to go a step further? Gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender. Read Acts 3:14-26, then use the following summary and questions for a deeper discussion.

Repent and believe. This is a good three-word summary of the action points Peter offered to the crowd that day. The same action points remain for all who have yet to trust in Christ. Though we live in a culture that seems to grow more complicated by the minute, there's a beautiful simplicity in what it means to follow Jesus. Just as it was then, we must repent and believe. Then we'll find ourselves with a newly restored purpose in life.

- 🎯 **Martin Luther nailed a document to a church door stating several protests against the established church. His first thesis reads: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent,' he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance." Discuss what you think this quote means.**
- ❓ **How can we help each other clarify God's purpose for our lives?**
- 🎯 **Practice sharing the gospel message with each other. Let each person take a turn, making sure to ask questions for clarification when necessary.**

DAY 1: There's no room for pride at the foot of the cross.

Read Acts 3:14-15.

The gospel is the best news imaginable. It takes us to the highest heights. But before it does so, it takes us low.

Think for a minute about the most basic message of Christianity as it applies to humanity. At its core is the most insulting of messages. No other world religion treats humanity with such pessimism. In all other schools of thought, we have something to bring to the table. We can strive toward God and meet Him, and in a sense, be congratulated when we do.

Not so with Christianity. In Christianity, the only thing we bring to the table is the sin we need to be rescued from. In this passage, Peter forced his listeners to confront the reality of their situation—they, and we, must be brought to our knees before we're lifted in the soul. No one can bypass this painful recognition. That's because the one character flaw that has, and will continue, to keep many people from Christ isn't greed. It's not lust. It's not lying or stealing or killing. It's pride.

There's no room for pride at the foot of the cross. Pride makes us overlook our moral bankruptcy. It subtly creeps in and like a snake in the grass whispers in our ear, "You really weren't that bad, were you? You never killed anyone did you?"

We're the people of the measuring stick. We want to constantly know how we're doing. We want to foster that sense of achievement in all areas of life. That's also why we're people of comparison. We love to look at others and say, "I'm messed up, but at least I'm not as bad as him. Or her."

But the Bible reminds us that we are as bad as him or her. Acknowledging that is a prerequisite to coming to the cross. And it's only when we know this to be true that we can find our souls lifted by the gospel message.

? What's an area of pride in your life that you need to let go of today? Where do you need to lay the measuring stick aside? Commit to do that and share your commitment with another believer for accountability and support.

DAY 2: Spiritual healing is always available to those who seek it.

Read Acts 3:16.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that the man in Acts 3 was healed. Healing consistently accompanied the ministry of Jesus, so why should it be any different when these disciples were proclaiming the message of Jesus with the power of Jesus?

It also shouldn't come as a surprise that Peter stepped to the front of the crowd and made the most of the opportunity afforded by the healing. This, too, is consistent with both the mission and ministry of Jesus.

Why did Jesus perform miracles similar to what was recorded in Acts 3? Because He loves people and has compassion for them. Jesus came in contact with those in need, just as Peter and John did, and then did something about their need. Something tangible. Something lasting. The lame were able to walk; the blind were able to see; those possessed by demons found themselves free from evil influence. But that's not the only reason Jesus healed.

John, in writing his gospel, looked back on the miracles, and referred to them as "signs." There was good reason behind his word choice, for a sign reveals some key piece of information that, without the sign, is unclear. Similarly, when Peter began to speak to the crowd, he took the healing as a sign and sought to make clear who Jesus is and what He came to do.

But Peter also wanted to make clear that as important as physical healing was, it wasn't the most important thing. Peter knew there was a greater sickness than what the man was experiencing, and consequently, there was a deeper healing needed. This is what Jesus primarily came to do—to free people from the disease of sin and return them to their true purpose of glorifying God.

In our time, God may or may not choose to physically heal; He makes those choices in His own timing and wisdom. But the spiritual healing that comes through Jesus alone? This kind of healing is prolific. It's always available to those who seek it.

? Who do you know who needs spiritual healing from Jesus? Pray for this person by name and ask God for an opportunity to talk with him or her about Jesus.

DAY 3: Life and fellowship with Jesus are worth repentance.

journal

Read Acts 3:17-19.

Repent was the first thing Peter called on the crowd to do. It's a familiar biblical word, one that the prophets of old called out to would-be followers of the God of Israel. It's important, then, for us to understand what the word means. And we can understand better what repentance means by understanding what it doesn't mean:

- **Repentance doesn't only mean stopping.** There is some stopping involved, but to repent means to turn away from something. Turning is different than stopping. It's bigger than stopping. We can stop and still be facing the same direction, sitting motionless. Repentance is about turning, choosing something better. It's about choosing life with Christ over life with anything else. Repentance is about valuing Jesus more than what we're doing.
 - **Repentance isn't only a message of judgment.** It is, of course, some about judgment. This was the focus of many of John the Baptist's recorded sermons: "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance" (Matthew 3:7-8). If repenting isn't just stopping but also turning around, and if the message of repentance is about choosing to turn to that which is ultimately satisfying and joyful, then this is nothing less than a message of great love. When God calls us to repent, He doesn't do so as a cosmic killjoy; He does so as a Father who loves His people too much to see us piddling around with the temporal pleasures of the world.
 - **Repentance isn't about willpower.** Okay, so, repentance is a little bit about willpower, but we're mistaken if we think willpower is the driving force behind it. And thank God it's not, or we would never truly repent because our willpower is embarrassingly and pitifully weak. Repentance is about faith. Rarely, if ever, do we feel like repenting. We feel more like sinning. But in the midst of the temporary pleasure of sin, there's the kernel of faith inside us that chooses to believe that even though we don't feel it in the moment, life and fellowship with Jesus are better.
- 🕒 **Have coffee with a Christian friend and discuss together what repentance has meant in your lives.**

DAY 4: Our repentance is safe because of Jesus.

Read Acts 3:19-20.

Peter called on the crowd to recognize and admit their own sin and turn back to God in humble repentance. The question then becomes: What would they find waiting for them if they did so?

This is a reasonable question to ask, especially since we're typically not very good at apologizing or receiving an apology from someone else. Similarly, we're not very good at repenting, and also not very good at receiving the repentance of others. When someone has wronged us and then comes to us seeking forgiveness and restoration, our hearts are often prone to swell with pride. Someone else is seeking something from us that we alone can grant them, and we may feel the power of the moment. Often, we give in to the temptation and only receive the person half-heartedly or conditionally.

It's no wonder, then, that we might be hesitant when we think of coming to God in repentance. God is different than we are. Our repentance is safe with Him. God won't look down from on high, waiting for us to form the best apology or the most articulate promises. He won't withhold His affection until we've proven that our repentance is real. Rather, like the father in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), God is waiting for our repentance with anticipation. In His love, He joyfully receives us when we return to Him, holding nothing back.

With a God like this waiting for us, there's no reason in the world we shouldn't turn to Him. We can turn to Him in humble confidence knowing His forgiveness isn't based on our well-formed words or formulaic answers; His forgiveness is based on the sacrifice of His Son. He stands ready to receive us because of Jesus.

? To whom do you need to offer forgiveness or ask for forgiveness? Consider how God receives us when we repent and determine to do the same with others.



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People may talk about ‘blessings’ in their lives, but the nonbeliever has no idea what a real blessing is because only the child of God truly knows what it is to be blessed.

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Greg Laurie

DAY 5: True blessing comes when we turn to Christ and His ways.

Read Acts 3:21-26.

What does it mean to be blessed? Peter answered this question in part with the conclusion of his sermon: “God raised up his servant and sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways” (v. 26).

In other words, Jesus—God’s Servant—was sent to bless us by turning us from our sinful lifestyles. Blessing is a kind of turning. This is a different way to think about what it means to be blessed, as we typically think of blessing in primarily physical terms—health, job security, relational harmony, wealth. These are the kinds of things that characterize God’s blessing, at least in our minds.

True blessing runs much deeper than this. True blessing comes when we realize the futility and meaninglessness of the way we’re living, and we turn to Christ and His ways instead. True blessing, then, is:

- **Meaning, not money.** Though money might buy all kinds of comforts, those comforts are temporary. When we turn to God, we can live a life based not on the pursuit of comfort, but of real, eternal meaning.
- **Peace, not prosperity.** Though prosperity might be what the world seeks after, when we turn to God, we find real peace. We no longer have to strive after accumulation, power, or anything else. We can live with a sense of peace, trusting in God’s love and provision.
- **Harmony, not health.** Although we might think it’s a blessing to be healthy, when we turn to God, we find the greater blessing of harmony. We’re no longer at odds with our Creator; we can live in harmony and friendship with Jesus.

🕒 **Review the bulleted list above and highlight the one that’s most important to you today. Explain why in the margin.**