

PURPOSE ABANDONED

THE POINT

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

THE PASSAGE

Psalms 8:1-6; 14:1-7

LIFE CONNECTION

The purpose for which God created us is far greater than any purpose we might devise for ourselves. Unfortunately, we fall short of God's desire and plan for us because we've sinned; we're drawn to live for our own selfish ends. Only when we turn back to God and seek Him can we begin to live with purpose.

BACKGROUND

Psalm 8 is one of seventy-three psalms attributed to King David. The instructions to the chief musician to use a "Gittith" probably indicate that this psalm was to be sung by a group accompanied by an instrument similar to a lyre; the gittith likely derived its name from the Philistine city of Gath. The psalm praises God for what He has done in creating the world and placing humanity over it as His stewards.

Psalm 14 was also written by King David. It details how the godless reject God's law (vv. 1-3) and oppress God's people (vv. 4-7). This portrait of the ungodly is placed between Psalm 13, which is a plea to God for deliverance from one's enemies, and Psalm 15, which is a description of the godly.

GETTING STARTED



5 MINUTES

DISCUSS: Give your group an opportunity to discuss **Question #1** on page 25 of the Daily Discipleship Guide (DDG): **What is the most interesting way you've ever used duct tape?**

RECAP (DDG, PAGE 26): Invite a volunteer to read **The Bible Meets Life** to introduce the session:

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 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.

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Point** on page 26 of the DDG. Invite the group to fill in the blank: **God created us with purpose, but our SIN keeps us from living out that purpose.**

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God to show us, through His Word, how we can turn from our sin and back to Him, so that we can begin to live with true purpose.

STUDY THE BIBLE



15 MINUTES

NOTES

PSALM 8:1-6

1 O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. **2** Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. **3** When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; **4** What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? **5** For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. **6** Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

GIVE BIBLICAL CONTEXT (DDG, PAGE 26): 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 man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest 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.

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 8:1-6 on page 26 of the DDG.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to statement 1 on page 26 of the DDG. Invite the group to fill in the blanks: **We were created to bring God PRAISE and GLORY.**

GUIDE: Use the commentary on the next page of this Leader Guide to talk about the things mentioned in these verses that call for our praise.

RECAP (DDG, PAGES 26-27): 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.

DISCUSS Question #2: How does God's creation inspire you to worship Him?

DO: Direct the group to the **Engage** activity on page 27 of the DDG (page 37 of this Leader Guide) to give them an opportunity to describe their understanding of our purpose and position in relation to God's creation.

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we see how we've turned away from God and His purpose for us.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

When have you recently felt inspired to praise God?

PSALM 8:1-6 *Commentary*

Connection to the Point. The psalmist marveled at God's creation and was astonished at the status He gave humanity.

O LORD, our Lord (v. 1). The first title for God, "LORD" (*Jehovah* [or *Yahweh*]), emphasizes God's eternity and self-sufficiency. "Lord" (*adon*) means one who has authority over another. It acknowledges God as the greatest power and the highest authority.

Excellent (v. 1). Also translated as "mighty," "majestic," "noble," "stately," and "magnificent." It means something superior to something else. God is above all and incomparable to all He has created, including humanity.

In all the earth . . . the heavens (v. 1). The majesty of God is proclaimed by all creation, which owes its existence to Him. The heavens themselves declare the glory of God and proclaim His works (19:1). He controls the circuit of the sun (vv. 4-6). The heavens were made by the word of the Lord, and the stars came into being through the breath of His mouth (33:6). He spoke and the world came into existence (vv. 8-9). God set the earth on its foundation (104:5) and caused the mountains to rise and valleys to fall (v. 8). He set the moon in the sky to signal the times and seasons (v. 19).

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength (v. 2). Two of the smallest and most vulnerable in society. Their voices praise God, as well as attest to His creative power. The Hebrew term for "ordained" (*yasad*) means "to lay a foundation." "Strength" (*oz*) literally refers to either physical strength or personal, social, and political strength. The praise of God's name and majesty from the mouths of the weakest of all humanity is more powerful than the assaults of God's most determined enemies. The Lord is pleased to use the weak to confound the strong and to accomplish His purposes.

Enemies (v. 2). Such individuals oppose God and His purposes and scoff at Him and His people (Psalm 42:10). God will eventually bring justice upon

His adversaries when He will forever silence **the enemy and the avenger**.

The work of thy fingers (v. 3). God is spirit. He does not have actual fingers. Here it is used to paint a picture of God creating the universe.

Man (v. 4). David contrasted God's creation with human beings, emphasizing humanity's seeming inconsequence when compared to the heavens, the moon, and the stars (vv. 3-4). Yet, human beings are made in the image of God and have been given the responsibility of caring for God's creation as His stewards/representatives. God gave human beings an exalted place over His creation with accompanying moral responsibilities. Adam and Eve's sin did not nullify this role. In this passage, the phrase **son of man** is parallel to "man." It refers to all the descendants of Adam.

A little lower than the angels (v. 5). This phrase emphasizes humanity's exalted position above the rest of God's creation. However, humanity remains below the status of the angels and that of God Himself. While made in God's image, humanity is in no way equal to God.

Crowned (v. 5). In addition to "crown," the Hebrew term can also mean "to surround" or "close in upon." In another of his psalms, David described how God had redeemed his life from destruction and crowned him with faithful love and compassion (103:4). Similarly, in Psalm 8 David wrote that in placing humanity in their exalted position as His stewards over creation, God had bestowed upon them glory and honour befitting their status.

Thou madest him to have dominion . . . under his feet (v. 6). As His stewards, humans express the authority God has given them as they live out the purpose God gave them—to exercise beneficial dominion over His creation. God has placed His creation under humanity's feet in the sense of giving them authority and dominion over creation as His stewards.

STUDY THE BIBLE



10 MINUTES

NOTES

PSALM 14:1-3

1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. **2** The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. **3** They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 14:1-3 on page 27 of the DDG.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to statement 2 on page 27 of the DDG. Invite the group to fill in the blank: **We have turned away from God and His PURPOSE for us.**

RECAP (DDG, PAGE 27): 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"; "none"; "not 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.

DISCUSS Question #3: What are some ways people avoid seeking God?

GUIDE: Use the commentary for verse 2 on the next page of this Leader Guide to discuss more about what it means to be wise and seek God in contrast to being a fool.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): See the optional activity (on page 37 in this Leader Guide) to give your group an opportunity to consider what it feels like for someone to turn his or her back on them.

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we see that when we turn to God as our refuge, He restores us.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

In a world that constantly seeks to turn us away from God, what practices can anchor us to Him?

PSALM 14:1-3 *Commentary*

Connection to the Point. Every human being is a sinner who has turned away from God.

Fool (v. 1). The fool is the opposite of a wise person who fears the Lord (Proverbs 1:7). The fool denies the existence of God; he rejects God, treating Him and His name with contempt (Psalm 74:18). The term for “fool” means “senseless.” It describes someone who has a closed mind in relation to God, godly living, and ethical behavior. He is characterized by immorality, and this is expressed in the way he lives and how he treats others. Abigail’s husband, Nabal, demonstrated such foolishness in how he treated David and his men, who had protected Nabal’s sheep while the animals were grazing in the wilderness (1 Samuel 25).

In his heart (v. 1). The Hebrew word for “heart” literally refers to the internal organ but is also used in reference to the totality of a person’s inner being, as well as to his emotions, mind, and will. The hardness of the fool’s heart is seen in the act of defiance, which flows out of the center of his being, **There is no God** (see also Proverbs 19:3).

Corrupt (v. 1). The fool is corrupt. The Hebrew term means “to destroy” or “bring to ruin.” Through his godless behavior and lifestyle, the fool destroys himself and brings grievous harm to others.

Abominable (v. 1). Also translated “abhorrent” or “detestable.” The fool’s actions are abominable because they are offenses against God. The term also includes ethical sins against other people. King Ahab of Israel “did very abominably in following idols” (1 Kings 21:26).

There is none that doeth good (v. 1). This statement does not mean that no one has the capacity to do good, but rather that because of our fallen nature, even our best deeds are tainted with sin. Isaiah noted, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Similarly, Paul wrote in Romans that no one seeks God, and in our fallen state (prior to salvation) we are enslaved to sin (Romans 3:9-20;

6:17). Only those works of believers done through the indwelling Holy Spirit are ultimately acceptable before God (Galatians 5:13-25).

Any that did understand, and seek God (v. 2). The Hebrew term for “understand” (*sakal*) refers to one who has insight and wisdom, particularly in relation to God and godly living. The wise are those who “seek” God. The term (*darash*) means “to search for and inquire about.” To seek someone is to look for him or her passionately. It can also be translated as “study.” The wise person fears the Lord (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7) which leads to an understanding of and relationship with God and translates into a lifestyle characterized by godly living (Proverbs 9:10).

All are gone aside (v. 3). People by nature are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-6), separated from God (Romans 5:10), and do not seek Him (3:9-18). While all people have turned away from God, in Jesus Christ God has taken the initiative to seek out sinners with the gospel of salvation (Matthew 18:12; Luke 19:10). Jesus has given His disciples the same role as His ambassadors, who are to go into the world to proclaim the need for people to repent of their sins and accept the offer of salvation in Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

STUDY THE BIBLE



10 MINUTES

NOTES

PSALM 14:4-7

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD. **5** There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous. **6** Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge. **7** Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 14:4-7 on page 27 of the DDG.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to statement 3 on page 27 of the DDG. Invite the group to fill in the blank: **When we turn to God as our REFUGE, He restores us.**

GUIDE: Use the commentary for verse 6 on the next page of this Leader Guide to emphasize the meaning of "refuge" and how God is our refuge.

DISCUSS Question #4: When has the Lord been a refuge for you in a difficult time?

RECAP (DDG, PAGE 27): 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.

DISCUSS Question #5: How has God restored you since turning to Christ?

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

Why are we sometimes reluctant to turn to God after we've sinned?

PSALM 14:4-7 *Commentary*

Connection to the Point. Dread awaits sinners, but God offers refuge for those who turn back to Him.

Workers of iniquity (v. 4). This phrase is parallel with the “fool” in verse 1. It emphasizes these people’s evil actions. Because their hearts are corrupted and evil, their actions reflect their inner condition.

No knowledge (v. 4). In the context of Psalm 14, it describes a lack of understanding about God. However, the problem is not just intellectual but relational. Evildoers will not seek after God; they intentionally turn away.

Eat up my people (v. 4). Evildoers seek to consume God’s people with their evil deeds. Instead of seeking God to meet their needs, evildoers attempt to meet their needs by taking from other people. To the wicked, such actions are as natural as a ravenously hungry person devouring a meal of bread.

Call not upon the LORD (v. 4). To “call . . . upon” is to call out to someone, in this case to God. Those who call out to God recognize their need for Him in their lives and call on the Lord in prayer (Psalm 34:6). The Lord promises to answer and save those who call out to Him (145:18-20). The fool does not call on the Lord because he does not believe he needs the Lord.

In great fear (v. 5). The defiance and complacency of workers of iniquity and fools has its consequences. Rejecting God and refusing a relationship with Him ultimately leads to judgment. While evildoers may terrorize the people of God for a time, in the end they will be filled with dread because **God is in the generation of the righteous**, meaning those who live in relationship with Him and seek to live according to His standards. An attack on God’s people is an attack on God Himself (Acts 9:1-5). God’s judgment will fall on all evildoers, in this life and/or ultimately at the final judgment. Believers today have no reason to dread, since God has forgiven their sins, reconciling them to Himself through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor (v. 6). The “poor” refers to needy, humble, and afflicted. In this case, God’s people who are suffering. The term is parallel to the “righteous” (v. 5). Those who do not acknowledge God often also actively oppose to those who live righteously.

Refuge (v. 6). A shelter, literally or figuratively, which the weak and vulnerable enter for protection. Hope and trust are associated with this word. God is the place of protection and source of security against the attacks of the wicked for the righteous. This does not mean that bad things will never happen to believers, but it does mean they can cry out to and seek God in times of trouble. He will walk with them through the trials and tribulations of life, giving them strength and endurance to withstand these experiences.

Salvation (v. 7). The term normally refers to rescue by God from earthly oppressors and dangers (Isaiah 33:2), but sometimes refers to deliverance in the spiritual sense (49:6)—from guilt, sin, and punishment.

Zion (v. 7). In the context of Psalm 14, Zion is the place where God dwells and from which the deliverance of His people comes.

Bringeth back the captivity of his people (v. 7). The captivity of his people can also be translated “his captive people.” The term for “bringeth back” (*shub*) has the basic meaning of “turn” in the sense of “return.” Figuratively it is used of repentance and the restoration of a relationship with God. God would eventually deliver His people from the opposition they faced for believing in Him and living righteously. God’s people could rejoice and be glad, for God would deliver them.

Jacob . . . Israel (v. 7). Jacob was the son of the patriarch Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. God changed Jacob’s name to Israel (Genesis 32:22-31), which reflected the change in Jacob from a deceiver to a man of God. In the Old Testament, both “Jacob” and “Israel” are used as identifiers for the Israelites.

LIVE IT OUT



5 MINUTES

NOTES

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

GUIDE: Direct your group to review the three bulleted statements under **Live It Out** on page 28 of the DDG. Call on volunteers to share (1) which of these statements is something they want to pursue further, or (2) ways this study will transform how they see their sin as an obstacle to living out their purpose this week.

- **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.

WRAP IT UP

GUIDE: Invite each person to gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender this week for a deeper discussion, using **Talk It Out** (page 28 of the DDG) to guide their discussion. Encourage your group to spend time each day in God's Word with the **Daily Study** section (pages 29-34 of the DDG).

RECAP: Read or restate from page 26 of the DDG.

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.

PRAY: Close your group time with prayer, thanking God for the opportunity we've been given to turn from our sin and return to Him, so that we can begin to live our lives with purpose.



SCAN ME



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ENGAGE

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



NOTES

BONUS CONTENT

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In **advance**, recruit two volunteers from your group to help you with an illustration. Explain that one volunteer will ask the other to share about one of his or her favorite trips. While this person is sharing, the other volunteer will turn away, acting distracted. Consider not telling the sharing volunteer that the listening volunteer will turn away, making his or her reaction more authentic.

- Call the pre-enlisted volunteers to the front of the room and instruct them to proceed with their conversation.
- After the volunteers are finished, talk as a group about how you think the person sharing felt when the other person turned away.
- Point out that we also have a tendency to get distracted by other things and turn our backs on God, but in the next section we'll see that we have an opportunity to turn back to Him.