



Purpose Restored

THE POINT

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

THE PASSAGE

Acts 3:14-26

QUESTION 1:

What's something you own that's been refurbished or restored?

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Paint doesn't last. It fades. It cracks. It peels. Live in a house long enough, and you will find yourself needing to repaint any exterior wood. I've had to do that twice over the years.

When I paint, though, I'm only dealing with one color. Wash the wall, scrap away anything that's peeling, and slap on a new coat.

Manageable. But dealing with hundreds of colors that have faded and been covered with years of grime is something altogether different. Art restoration is a monumental task best not left to people like me. Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," the fresco painted on a wall at the refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie, began to deteriorate shortly after da Vinci put his brushes away. Since its completion in 1498, the painting has undergone seven attempts at restoration, and the last one took twenty years.¹

We need restoration too. We've lost our way, wandered from God, and painted over the abundant life and purpose God created us for with the dull color of self and the grime of sin. No DIY effort will do. We need the Master Restorer.

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.

Few people like interruptions. I don’t, but I’m trying more and more to see interruptions—those unplanned phone calls or encounters—as opportunities. That’s what the apostles Peter and John did. In Acts 3, these two followers of Jesus were headed to the temple to pray. Prayer is certainly an important and needed practice for all of us, but Peter and John were interrupted. They encountered a lame beggar, but instead of giving him a few coins, they gave him something better. Peter said, “I don’t have silver or gold, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!” (v. 6).

The man was immediately healed, and he was able to do something he had never done before: “he entered the temple with them” (v. 8). His lameness had barred him from coming in. But the man didn’t just enter; he was “walking, leaping, and praising God” (v. 8). I think even today someone leaping around would draw a crowd, and a crowd was definitely what formed in the temple that day. Peter seized this interruption and turned it into an opportunity to talk about Jesus.

Peter began with a question that had an obvious answer: “Fellow Israelites, why are you amazed at this?” (v. 12). *Why?* A disabled man who has never walked is leaping

around! Yet to Peter's point, this man was healed, not by the two apostles, but by Jesus. Giving health and healing to people was routine work for Jesus, all in a day's work. Peter was clear in giving the honor and glory to Jesus.

Peter then turned the attention away from the healed man and to the crowd. He had brought Jesus into the conversation, but then said, "You denied the Holy and Righteous One . . . You killed the source of life" (vv. 14-15). That was a serious and sobering accusation; the Greek meaning behind "denied" doesn't necessarily mean they didn't believe, but that they refused to accept. Even though the people were aware of Jesus's teaching and incredible miracles, they didn't want Him. Peter wanted them to understand that they didn't just reject some itinerant rabbi; Jesus is "the Holy and Righteous One" (v. 14). This wasn't lost on the Jewish crowd. Peter was referring to Jesus as God's Messiah. Here was God's Messiah—the very source of life—in their midst, but they rejected Him and killed Him.

Thankfully, that wasn't the end of the story. God raised Jesus from the dead. This wasn't hearsay or wishful thinking. Peter and John stood there

as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus.

Because Jesus is alive, He is still at work. He works on our behalf as we place our "faith in his name" (v. 16). The name of Jesus isn't some magical word; even for us, our names represent the whole of who we are. So to put faith in the name of Jesus is to believe in and trust in Jesus's authority and power. Because Jesus is alive, putting our faith in Him is still as powerful and transforming as it was for this once crippled man.

But how much faith does it take? We don't know how much faith or understanding this crippled man had, but when Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk" (v. 6), it was enough for him to take hold of Peter's hand. Mustard seeds are incredibly small—1/8th of an inch in diameter—but Jesus said, "For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matt. 17:20). And nothing is impossible! A man stood with Peter and John who could attest to that. Beyond the physical healing, Jesus healed him spiritually. And He can do the same for you.

QUESTION 2:

Where do you see evidence in our culture that people need restoration?

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.

“I’ve got good news and bad news. What do you want to hear first?” One study found that those delivering the news prefer to give the good news first. They see it as a way to ease into the bad news. But the same study found that those hearing the news prefer to hear the bad news first.² We like ending on a positive note. We like stories with happy endings, don’t we?

Peter had led with the bad news first. The bad news was wrapped up in the healing of the crippled man, but there it was: You killed the One who is the source of life! You may have acted in ignorance (v. 17), not fully realizing the implications of denying and rejecting Jesus (vv. 13-14), but it’s still bad news. You had a hand in crucifying the Son of God.

Peter now followed with good news. Their past actions were not the end of the story if they acted upon the next words Peter spoke: “Therefore repent and turn back” (v. 19). Change your mind about Jesus and the life you have been living apart from Him. This is more than altering and tweaking your opinion of Jesus; it’s a complete 180-degree change in direction. Picture the soldiers on parade who are given the command, “About face.” They turn around in the opposite direction. That was the call issued to the crowd that day, and it’s the invitation we’re given. Your past doesn’t need to determine your future. Come to Jesus in full repentance of your past—turning fully away from your sin and turning fully to God—and see what He does!

QUESTION 3:

What are some obstacles that keep us from repentance?

Peter points to three things God does when we repent and turn back.

1. **Your sins are wiped out.** “Wiped out” (v. 19) carries the meaning of “erased.” Ink didn’t soak into first-century parchments as ink does on our modern-day paper. A wet sponge could erase whatever was on a parchment in the same way we might erase a whiteboard today. It doesn’t matter how stained we are from our past failures, rebellion, and sin; Christ’s death on the cross fully erases and makes us clean.

2. **Seasons of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord.** Jesus doesn’t just remove the bad; He replaces it with something good! For most of us, fall is quickly approaching. Depending on where you are, you may have already begun experiencing the hints of fall. After the sweltering days of August, that first day you step outside and feel a significant change in the temperature is so refreshing.

After a life of sweltering sin, the cool breeze of forgiveness

DIGGING DEEPER

Repent and Turn Back

The term *repent* translates the usual Greek word for repentance (*metanoeo*) which means “a change of mind or practice.” It involves remorse and sorrow for one’s sins, but it also involves a change in one’s thinking that results in a change in one’s actions. This is captured by the term *epistrepho*, which is translated *turn back* or “convert.” The individual needs to turn away from his or her sins and turn toward God.

is so refreshing. To walk with a restored purpose in life is a breath of fresh air. Even as believers, we can face days with challenging circumstances, but we can walk through them refreshed as we lean on the presence of the Lord.

3. **He will send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.** We can experience the forgiveness and refreshment of His presence in our lives, but that is only an inkling of what’s to come when Jesus returns to set up His eternal kingdom. Jesus had ascended to heaven—“Heaven must receive him” (v. 21)—but a day is coming when it will be “the restoration of all things” (v. 21).

ENGAGE

Look at the list below. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal those areas where you need restoration. Mark the one(s) the Holy Spirit revealed.

Financial responsibility	Sexual purity	Building up the body of Christ
My role in my family	Relationships	Being a witness
Biblical study	Prayer	Serving

Other:

Choose one or two that you marked and complete this sentence:

Jesus, I confess my sin and will demonstrate my repentance through the following actions:

When we repent and turn to God, we have a sure and certain hope that a day is coming when Christ returns, and:

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

QUESTION 4:

When have you seen repentance lead to restoration?

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.”

One of the most offensive statements a Christian can make is that Jesus is the only way to God. We are viewed as arrogant and narrow-minded because we take Jesus at His word when He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). But that isn’t just the sentiment of people on the outside looking at the church; up to 70 percent of people who claim to be Christians say there are more ways to God.³

Peter would certainly disagree with that erroneous viewpoint. He heard Jesus speak that claim of exclusivity with his own ears. If there’s more than one way to God, why did Jesus have to die on the cross? Even Jesus Himself prayed, “My Father, if it is

possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matt. 26:39). There was no other way, and Jesus went to the cross. Peter confirmed this when he said, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

If anyone thought they had an inside track into coming to God, it would be the Jews. They were descendants of Abraham. They had Moses, and God Himself gave the law to Moses. They had God’s spokespersons, the prophets. They had the covenants, the special relationships God established with His people.

But that wasn’t enough. Even Moses, the highly esteemed leader of the Jewish people, spoke of Another.

“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” (3:22). The prophets also pointed to Him.

One morning at church, a friend confessed to me that she doesn’t like to read the Old Testament. “I prefer the New Testament because it’s about Jesus.” That’s such a sad and uninformed view of the Old Testament because the Hebrew Scriptures are full of Jesus! I love reading the Old Testament. On average, I read through the Bible three-to-four times every year, and I do it because I love reading God’s Word. And every time I go through the Old Testament—*every* time—I see Jesus the Messiah. After His resurrection, Jesus taught two confused disciples on the road to Emmaus. “Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27).

The Hebrew Scriptures—the Old Testament—make a big deal about the Messiah. As Moses said, “You must listen to everything he tells you” (Acts 3:22). When Moses said “listen,” he used the Hebrew word

shama, which means more than hearing the words. It includes action. We hear something, and we act upon what we hear. Parents understand this. If you’ve ever had to say firmly to a child (or a thirty-year-old living in the basement), “This room needs to be clean”—and then added with a dramatic pause—“Do you hear what I’m saying?” you understand the Hebrew! You’re not just passing on information; you expect something to be done with that information. *Clean this room—now!*

Listen to the Messiah and do what He says. Repent and turn to God. He’s the only one worth listening to. There’s great news because He wants us to come to Him. He wants to save us. He wants to bless us. But it’s through Him—and only through Him.

QUESTION 5:

How has your life been restored and refreshed because of Jesus?

LIVE IT OUT

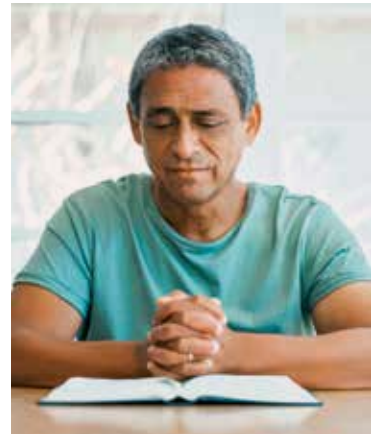
Jesus wants to restore you to the purpose for which you were created. What will you do with that truth?

Repent. Restoration begins by coming to Christ in repentance and faith. If you've never made a commitment of your life to Christ, you can do so now. Talk to someone in your Bible study group about your desire to follow Christ. The inside front cover of this book can tell you more.

Refresh. Even as a Christian, life can be challenging. Thankfully, you're not alone. Spend some focused and unhurried time with Jesus by praying and reading His Word. Let His Spirit wash over you to keep you strong.

Restore. Let others see Jesus in you as you live out a renewed and restored purpose. You can't restore others to their purpose in Christ, but you can be a testimony to them of how Christ restores. Be ready to tell your story to all who are willing to hear.

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/27/arts/after-a-20-year-cleanup-a-brighter-clearer-last-supper-emerges.html>
2. <https://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/good-news-first-or-bad-news-right-answer-according-to-science-and-emotional-intelligence.html>
3. <https://probe.org/probe-survey-report-4-witnessing-to-your-faith-and-the-response/>



One, Two, Three Gospel Waltz

I'm generally right in my own eyes. Perhaps more precisely stated, I'm normally right in my own eyes. I also happen to have zero cavities, a fact that my husband likes to bring up when it underscores a point he wants to make—namely how I think I'm never wrong. It's easy for me to be tempted to think this is mere jealousy as his own mouth may have a mortgage, but facts are facts. Okay . . . okay . . . message received, my dear husband. Likely, it's time for some quick repentance.

Heavy On Repent

My husband is heavy on repentance. It's no secret that in our marriage he is the chief repenter. Try as I might, he's just so great at it. My husband says it's his job, but with me being so knowledgeable at almost everything, I think it would be excellent if I could outdo him at repenting. Wait a second . . . has my husband set a trap here? Is he trying to get me to be the—ARGH! Outsmarted by my better half!

My husband though—he's onto something with this repentance thing. It's a failsafe starting point to draw me toward him in humility, remind us both of what is true of the gospel and our marriage, and motivate us toward the unity of experiencing a fresh reminder of grace together. It's such a great place to begin because it mirrors the very same starting point from which God invites us to draw near to Him. We see that those who repent to the Lord are met with His compassion in return (see Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5; Prov. 28:13), are invited to experience all the ways repentance leads to life (see Acts 11:18), and find actual eternal life—not just for the not yet of eternity—but also for the here and now (see Ps. 16:11; Rom. 6:23).



Waltzing Toward One Another

Repentance isn't just a biblical place to start; it's *the* place to start in the easily memorable three-step framework of repent, believe, and fight that my pastor, Bob Flayhart, has coined "The Gospel Waltz," for how to actually abide in Christ, day

in and day out, this side of eternity. Through this lens, we see that God is using every circumstance of our lives to invite us to commune more intimately with Him. No challenging marriage, missed promotion, frustrating season, or physical or metaphorical heartache

is beyond His control, and He is willing everything in and around us to mold us in Christlikeness. (See Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11.) He's constantly pursuing our hearts in love to show us our need for Christ and to reveal the beauty and power of the cross. The Gospel Waltz is a tool to help us steady our eyes and hearts on this truth, so that we can readily experience it.

Eyes for the Gospel Waltz

The Gospel Waltz is a dance, a continual three step through repentance, belief, and moving out in trust and obedience (fight) as we commune with Christ. Thinking in terms of the continuity of these three steps reminds our hearts to respond to God's pursuit of us by acknowledging our sin, brokenness, and need (repent), preaching the gospel afresh to our hearts as is related to our standing and status in Christ, as well as the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (believe), and moving out in new obedience toward the circumstances and relationships He has called us to (fight). When we mess up and find ourselves in sin, lo and behold it's a fresh opportunity to continue dancing, entering right back in to

another one-two-three pattern, taking Christ up on His offerings of fresh mercy and transforming grace. Over time, practicing these three steps in our minds and hearts strengthens the practice, and we can avoid the hazards of getting stuck in traps, such as worldly regret that doesn't move us onward in fresh faith and action, the passivism of "repent and believe," or the tentacles of the Texas two-step of "confess and try harder."

Reframing Repentance

Repentance gets a bad rap, doesn't it? For many of us, it conjures up feelings of shame or guilt, failure, or having disappointed or disgusted those we care about, and above all, God. But none of these attributes reflect godly repentance. In 2 Corinthians 7:10, we see that godly grief "produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret." To me, that sounds like a heart being set free, not burdened by a weight it was never intended to carry on its own.

Biblical repentance exhibits biblical humility in surrender and brokenness and contrition—a path where there is no confidence in self-reformation. True repentance says,

“God, I’m sorry. I make no promises to do better because unless You supernaturally transform me by Your grace, I will end up giving into temptation again.”

In what feels like a former life, I was a Spanish teacher, trained at the masters level in Spanish Literature. As the years have passed, one would think that my Spanish has just gotten better and better, improving with age and subtlety and skill, as I’ve gone about collecting more bits and baubles of the nuance of a foreign language. I’m embarrassed to say the exact opposite is true. Over time, my Spanish has gotten so bad that I’m embarrassed to reveal my educational and professional history. And what’s even more painful is that with every conversation I now have in Spanish, I can hear myself. I can hear just how bad it is.

I’ve experienced sin in much the same way. After placing my trust in Christ, I assumed I would feel more godly over time. But the only thing that steadily increases is my awareness of the nature of my sin being virally pervasive, harmful, and constant—because the more I learn of God’s Word and His heart, the more unlike Him I realize I actually am.

If I can step back from my frustration in not feeling like I’m getting “better and better” (less sinful) as I age, I can see what God’s getting at: ever-increasing dependence on Him. It turns into an invitation to waltz with Him continually, and not just at the moment of placing trust in Him or in that someday of eternity.

My need of Christ far exceeds my need of a three-month immersive Spanish language refresher program somewhere in Costa Rican beachside territory. My need is so pervasive that it beckons me to be the chief repentor in all relationships, and not just in the one with my husband. But that’s what’s so great about Christ’s pursuit of us and call to us: His continual invitation to fall at His feet and declare afresh, “I can’t do this. Thank you for doing it for me.” This invitation to repent, believe, and fight is always present. He enables us to hear the one-two-three . . . one-two-three . . . and again we begin to waltz afresh with Christ, who gently leads us to begin with repentance.

Alongside her pastor, Bob Flayhart, Holly Mackle is the co-author of Bob’s life sermon, *The Gospel Waltz: Experiencing the Transformational Power of Grace*. She gardens, writes, and teaches *The Gospel Waltz* through story from her home in Birmingham, Alabama.