

2 - Why am I now a Christian?

As Christians, it's important for us to understand why God gifted us with salvation? Understanding the purpose for your salvation will help motivate you to follow Jesus faithfully and obediently.

We suggest pausing throughout this lesson to read the Bible passages that are referenced but not quoted. By doing this you will maximise the impact of God's Word in your life. Also, write extra notes that will help you to remember the lessons learned. It is also helpful to highlight verses in your Bible that impact you. We suggest using coloured pencils or a fine-tipped pen. As a secondary tool, a Bible App can be helpful also.

Some common questions new Christians ask are:

- Was salvation simply so I could receive eternal life and carry on living the way I want?
- Does salvation mean that God works all things for my enjoyment in this life?
- Now that I've said the sinner's prayer, does that mean that I go to heaven following a life of doing as I please and God giving me everything I ask for?
- Does being a Christian mean that I have to give up things I really like?
- Now that I've confessed to being a sinner, will God take all my problems away?
- Does God have a purpose for me as a Christian?

These questions are clearly answered in the Bible. However, the most important question in the above list, is the last one; "Does God have a purpose for me as a Christian?" In this lesson we shall focus on answering this single question.

The answer is YES! God has a definite purpose for you now that you are a Christian. Salvation is simply the beginning of your adventure with Jesus Christ. In fact, God's purpose for you existed long before you were even born.

God determined from eternity past for you to respond favourably to Him through putting faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Consequently, you *believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit* and became an expression of *the praise of his glory* (Ephesians 1:13-14). That has always been God's unchanging purpose for your life in Christ. Everything about you, including your strengths and weaknesses, along with any future struggles or problems, have become a living, breathing, moving, public statement of *his glorious grace* (Ephesians 1:6).

This means, everything that makes you the unique person that you are, is intended by God for living out the loving grace of Jesus Christ. Our purpose as Christians is for God to get all the recognition, all the thanks, and all the glory for what He has done and continues to do in our lives.

Believers in Jesus Christ *are his* [God's] *workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10). Long before we showed any interest in Jesus, the Lord was arranging good works that He wanted us to be busy with following

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salvation. Nothing could be left to chance, and nothing could be left to our questionable motives when it comes to our Christian works.

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The apostle Peter explains that believers in Jesus are *a people for his [God's] own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light* (1 Peter 2:9). Because we belong to Jesus, we tell others how excellent Jesus is. Therefore, we are careful not to allow ourselves to become distracted because it is *our aim to please him* in all areas of life (2 Corinthians 5:9).

If you have entrusted your life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, there are three basic stages of life which God has planned for you in advance.

1) God planned your salvation

King David observed that the Lord *created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb* (Psalm 139:13). You were not an accident. Even if your parents did not plan your birth, God did. God was in control of your life from the very beginning within your mother's womb. The earthly circumstances of your inception were reasoned through and measured by God. Your inception did not escape God's attention, no matter what the circumstances were. We are the product of God's will, even if we do not understand how this can be, God states this as fact.

Earlier David said of God, *you hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me* (Psalm 139:5). You see, David understood that it was God who invisibly moved his life into the right places and connected him to the people of God's choice. Despite David's wrong decisions at times, and his periods of resistance, God did everything necessary to get David to where God wanted him.

Likewise, *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). God was graciously working on our salvation long before we realised what was going on. You and I contributed nothing to our salvation. *Even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ...* (Ephesians 2:5). Salvation was always outside of our grasp or control. Here we see God's patient and determined grace at work. God never gave up on us, even though there would have been many times when we would have rejected Him.

Because we sinners *were dead in the trespasses and sins* of our lives (Ephesians 2:1), we were not able to choose to believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. You see, dead people don't think, and they don't realise that they are dead, because they are dead. They don't desire to be alive because they are unable to reason their way out of being spiritually dead. So, God steps in and works on our behalf to make it possible for us to believe. Every intricate phase of coming to faith in Jesus was accommodated by God. Yet, we think that we did it; we reasoned through it, we

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chose to exercise our will to believe, and we repented. We did it. Correct! Which is precisely what God wanted and God enabled you and I to do. **This is why God gets the praise!**

Jesus explained to His disciples that *no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father* (John 6:65). *Did I not choose you?* Jesus told His disciples (John 6:70). You are a gift from God the Father to God the Son, chosen by God Himself.

But here is an even more wonderful thing that stretches our minds past our ability to fully understand. God did this by giving us the required faith so that we could believe in Jesus. *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God* (Ephesians 2:8). Because you and I were dead in sin, and dead people have no faith, God graciously gifted us with the faith that we needed for us to believe in the Lord Jesus.

God left nothing to chance when it came to getting dead sinners to receive eternal life. In John 1:12-13, Jesus tells us that *as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

- ✓ We chose to receive Jesus through believing in Jesus – that was our responsibility.
- ✓ It was Jesus who entitled us, He gave us the right to be born again (John 3:3) into God's family as God's children.
- ✓ Salvation was not the result of our human will, or of our human efforts, but it was an act of God's will.
- ✓ It was Jesus who made it possible for God's will to be done in our sinful lives.

If you picture in your mind, God's will and your belief working together it will help you to grow in appreciation of how the Lord accomplished your salvation. God made it possible for you to believe



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in harmony with His plan for your salvation. God was engaged with you to produce the outcome of your surrendered belief in Jesus as Lord and forgiver of your sin. This was God's determined intention for you all along.

To use a human illustration, imagine two gears spinning. If we move those two gears towards each other until they touch, there would be lots of noise, sparks, and broken pieces flying off as they crashed. That's what God's will and our disbelief would have been like if God did not arrange everything that was needed for both to work together.

Now, imagine those same two gears being meshed in synchronisation before they begin to spin. The outcome is obvious. They work together in perfect harmony while rotating. No crashing, just harmony. In this illustration, God is the one who precisely knows everything that is happening with both parties. While we, with extremely limited understanding, only perceive our side of the events.

This simplistically illustrates God's ingenious and gracious nature. He graciously brings His control into sinful mankind by enabling sinners to intelligently express faith through their individual characters as they willingly believe in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. They do this without realising that they are believing in conjunction with God's will for them. Later, they look back, and see how God was working in their lives all along and they were simply following His lead.

2) God planned your life for usefulness

As mentioned earlier in Ephesians 2:10, Paul explained that *we are his* [God's] *workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*. While good works do not provide our salvation, they are the product of salvation. Jesus says in John 15:8, *by this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples*. Our good works give evidence of Christ being active in our lives.

The Lord intends us to walk with Him each day as willing and obedient participants. God wants us to live in such a way that we express the *fruit of the Spirit* (Galatians 5:22), doing good works produced by Christlike character, as opportunity permits.

The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps (Proverbs 16:9). We plan our lives, sometimes other people attempt to alter our plans, and even unexpected circumstances may affect our plans. But it's God who determines and adjusts the outcome and the long-term results of our plans to fulfil His will and maximise our eternal blessing.

The apostle Paul even acknowledges God's purposes in the painful times of life (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4). No circumstance in your life is wasted by God as He joins His purposes with the events of your life for His glory. Included in this is our capacity to serve Him through the daily events and relationships of life. Paul instructed Timothy that through God's Word, believers *are equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

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Without realising it, through your ordinary day to day life, *it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure* (Philippians 2:13). He is partnered with you constantly for His pleasure and your blessing. He has calculated all the possibilities and even made allowances for your weaknesses, mistakes, and failings. He does this for the purpose of keeping His plans for your life on track, even if we cannot see it at the time. Every day, every event, every relationship, has purpose and meaning, therefore, they all have value.

In God's kindness, He has connected you with Christian friends who will be able to assist you to grow in your Christian life through the pleasant and difficult times. Together, you will be a comfort and a strength to each other as you walk the life of faith together. Study the Bible together, pray together, worship together, fellowship together, and serve together. All these will become the source of usefulness with meaning and value in your Christian life.

3) God planned your heavenly home

Romans 8:30 tells us that *those whom he* [God] *predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified*. God's intention is to get you to heaven. No matter what happens in this life, believers have the hope of heaven and God is committed to getting us there.

The believer's heavenly destination is as certain as their salvation. It is God alone *who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy...* (Jude 1:24). As with all of us, there will be difficult times in life when you will struggle, but Jesus Christ is the one who gives you the inner strength to continue to the end of this earthly walk. His purpose is to introduce you into heaven with great joy as God's child who has been cleansed and prepared by Jesus Himself.

Jesus explained it this way to His disciples, *this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day* (John 6:40). No-one can take Jesus' gift of eternal life from you. *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand* (John 10:28-29). Christian, you are safe in Jesus Christ! Both God the Father and God the Son have a firm grip on you. Both Father and son are determined to use all their power to get you into their heavenly presence. Nothing can change that!

Conclusion

We have thought about some big things in this lesson. While we trust God's Word completely, we ask that the Lord grow our understanding of how these truths work out in our lives, *so, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (1 Corinthians 10:31).

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The answer is, **to bring God pleasure and glory!**

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