Becoming a Woman of Purpose

CHAPTER THREE - GOD’S PURPOSE:

TO LOVE HIS PEOPLE

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

1 John 3:1 KJV

In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. . . . God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that he may love and perfect them.

C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves

God, in all His glory and majesty, desires for us to know Him fully and to impart Himself to us. God longs to love us for He knows that His love is the only love that frees and completes us. His love is the only love that will truly satisfy us, for it is eternal and unconditional. God, through history, has communicated His love and desire for a people called by His Name. In order for us to want to reflect God’s glory, we must comprehend God’s great love for us. David knew of God’s love for him, for he sang, “For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell” (Psalms 86:13).

God’s Purpose: To Love Us

In John 15, Jesus says, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love” (verse 9). God desperately wants us to receive His love – even bask in it! But God will not force us to love Him; He initiates and He waits. Jesus gives us a beautiful example of God love in Luke 15:11-32.

1. How is God’s love revealed in the father’s response to the return of the younger son (verses 20-24)?

2. How does the father’s response to the complaint of the elder son reveal God’s love (verses 25-32)?

3. What does this story tell you about God’s love?

It is wrong to speak of God’s need of love from his creation, but remember how God himself expressed his longing for that love: like a father starved for some response, any response, from his rebellious children; like a jilted lover who, against all reason, gives his faithless beloved one more chance. Those are the images God summoned up again and again throughout the time of the prophets. The deepest longings we feel on earth, as parents, as
God’s Purpose: To Be Loved

4. Throughout history God has proved and communicated His love for His people. We talk about God’s love for us, but rarely do we consider God’s heart to be loved in return. Luke 13:34 gives us a glimpse of God’s earnest desire for our love. What does the imagery Jesus uses convey about His longing to be loved?

That wail of grief over Jerusalem has about it a quality almost like shyness. Jesus, who could destroy Jerusalem with a word, who could call down legions of angels to force subjection, instead looks over the city and weeps. God holds back; he hides himself; he weeps. Why? Because he desires what power can never win. He is a king who wants not subservience, but love. Thus, rather than mowing down Jerusalem, Rome, and every other worldly power, he chose the slow, hard way of Incarnation, love, and death. A conquest from within.

Philip Yancey

5. Hosea 11:1-4 pictures God’s love for His people, Israel. What do you notice in this passage about God’s tenderness toward those He loves?

What does God get in return? He gets adopted children who are petty, petulant, spoiled, demanding, argumentative, mistrusting, angry, critical, and an irritant to everyone but God. . . . Nevertheless, our God bought us with an infinite price and intends on seeing us crowned with His very glory. Is it any wonder that Paul shouts at the top of his lungs, “I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19). Paul prays that I will know the unknowable love and be so full of God that I achieve dimensions of being that reflect the boundlessness of God.

Dan B. Allender

6. What is your response to God’s desire to love you?

AUTHOR’S REFLECTION – I am overwhelmed with God’s steadfast love for His people. His love is freely given, is unconditional, is undeserved, and cannot be earned. Nothing has been too costly for God to express His love. The ultimate confirmation of His desire is His sending His Son to die for us. Someone has said that the Cross is God shouting through history how much He loves.

The very best thing I can do for myself is to seek to grasp the depth of God’s love for me. If I am secure in God’s devotion, then I am free to love others without depending on them to meet my need for love. Only God’s love is everlasting, unreserved, and complete. His love forgives, molds, disciplines, and equips me to live. There is no equal or substitute for God’s love. Psalm 16:4 warns us, the sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied. Whereas those who receive the Lord’s love have their treasuries filled with the best that God has to offer.

Why would I want anything else, but the precious love of God?
In the Incarnation and Crucifixion, Christ is the ultimate expression of God’s love. Looking at the Cross, we too can be sure that this God of love will, “along with [Christ], graciously give us all things” (Romans 8:32). Convinced that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39), we face life and death with confidence. In Christ every event in our personal history takes on fresh perspective, for the Cross assures us of God’s endless love.

Lawrence O. Richards

God’s Purpose for Me (For Contemplation and Prayer)

7. Over the next few days, think about God’s love for you and His desire for you to return His love. To help your reflection and application, carefully consider the verse given below.

And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him. Isaiah 30:18

Use these questions to guide your meditation.

8. What barriers in my life keep me from receiving God’s love?

9. How am I blessed by His love?

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE MEMORY: Isaiah 30:18
Luke 15:11-32

A certain man had two sons: 12. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. 19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. 25. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. 29. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Luke 13:34

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Hosea 11:1-4

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

Ephesians 3:17-19

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Psalms 16:4

Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

Romans 8:32

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?