

Searching **FOR** Significance

A LIFE OF
SIGNIFICANCE

A 7-Day Devotional

DAY 1: THE DESIRE



NOTHING

on this earth can fully satisfy our longing for significance and worth

— nothing apart from
Jesus.

Jesus replied, “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.”

“But sir, you don’t have a rope or a bucket,” [the Samaritan woman] said, “and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water?” ...

Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

— John 4:10-14

DESIRING MORE

We’re all searching for something in life. Whether you want to call it significance, purpose, meaning or something else, there is an innate desire in each of us for our life to matter, to have significance and purpose. We long to be something, to be someone.

But all too often we look to things such as career, status, wealth, relationships and accolades to give us a sense of purpose and significance. We look to temporary solutions, rather than a permanent solution.

As followers of Christ, we know the truth (in our heads, if not in our hearts): Nothing on this earth can fully satisfy our longing for significance and worth — nothing apart from Jesus.



SATISFYING OUR THIRST

In John 4 we see Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. This woman has to come to the well daily — maybe even multiple times a day — to satisfy her thirst. But Jesus says to her, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again” (John 4:13-14a). He’s offering that same water to us! In him, our desperate thirst is quenched forever.

God has given us this desire to be known, to make a difference, to have our lives mean something in the end. It’s just a matter of finding the right answer the right way, and through the right source.

As we explore how our search for significance plays out in our daily life, perhaps we should ask ourselves: What are we really seeking? And how do we find it?

👉 POINTS TO PONDER

- 👉 In your search for meaning, purpose and significance, where do you often find yourself drawn? What solutions do you look toward?
- 👉 In what ways can you daily drink of this living water that Jesus offers us? How can you continuously find satisfaction in him, rather than in temporary solutions?

DAY 2: THE SEARCH



WE ARE A VISIBLE REPRESENTATION OF THE VERY NATURE OF GOD, AND WE ARE MEANT TO LIVE THAT OUT MOMENT BY MOMENT, DAY BY DAY.

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

— Genesis 1:26-27

GOD’S PERFECT DESIGN

You probably already know the story in the verses to the left — God spent six days creating everything in the world, and it was all good. He said so himself at the end of every day! And as his final act, he created human beings — in his image.

It’s easy to quickly pass over that as you read the account of creation. And if you’ve been a follower of Christ for a long time, you’ve heard it over and over again.

But take a moment to let that sink in. You and I — we’re made in the image of God.

Maybe you struggle with understanding what that really means. J.I. Packer sums it up well when he says:

Image means representative likeness — which tells us at once that we should be reflecting, at our creaturely level, what Genesis 1 shows God is and does. Therefore we should always act with resourceful rationality and wise love, making and executing praiseworthy plans just as God did in creation. He generated value by producing what was truly good; so should we. We should be showing love and goodwill toward all other persons, as God did when he blessed Adam and Eve (1:28). And in fellowship with God, we should directly honor and obey him by the way we manage and care for that bit of the created order that he gives us to look after, according to his dominion mandate (26, 28).

If you think about it, the significance of God making us in his image is huge. We are a visible representation of the very nature of God, and we are meant to live that out moment by moment, day by day. Yes, sin got in the way and marred that likeness, but the foundation of our existence is still there. We are living representations of God himself! And because of that, we have this innate desire to be whole, to be fully restored to our perfect selves.

We experience that desire daily in this internal struggle to matter. It's part of who we are, because God created us that way. He created us to want so much more than this current life or fallen state can give us.

That's why we search for significance and meaning. Even though part of us is broken, marred, we search, often looking in all the wrong places. Instead we need to find our significance and worth in our Creator God — drinking of the eternal water that will permanently satisfy our unquenchable thirst for more — where we'll find all the answers we'll ever need.



👉 POINTS TO PONDER

- 👉 In your search for purpose, what traps do you fall into? Where do you find yourself looking for your significance and worth, rather than looking to God himself?
- 👉 What does it mean to you to be made in the image of God? How does that design and plan impact the way you live your life?

DAY 3: THE ADOPTION

WITH JESUS' SACRIFICE,

we weren't only redeemed

(as if that wasn't enough!).

We were also given the chance

to be adopted into

GOD'S FAMILY.

*You received God's Spirit when he
adopted you as his own children.
Now we call him, "Abba, Father."
For his Spirit joins with our spirit to
affirm that we are God's children.
And since we are his children, we
are his heirs. In fact, together with
Christ we are heirs of God's glory.*

— Romans 8:15b-17a

THE GREAT SEPARATION

Before we can truly dive into thinking about the purpose of our lives, we must first explore the significance not only of being made in God's image but of being adopted by God into his eternal family.

When Adam and Eve sinned, the perfect world that God created was corrupted. And with that corruption, sin marred our perfect relationship with him too.

Because of their sin, God had to banish Adam and Eve from the garden. But it was not only their banishment; it was the banishment of all mankind. No longer could we walk in the garden with God, face to face. No longer could we stand before him, unashamed.

At this point of the biblical narrative — just three chapters in! — everything goes wrong. If that’s where the story ended, we’d likely feel upset and hopeless, outraged even! Where’s the love in this situation?

We see it played out over the following centuries as God introduced a way for man to be temporarily reconciled to him. But it came at a cost — the Israelites were commanded to live by many laws and regulations to keep them in right standing before him. They had to offer sacrifices on a continual basis to be cleansed of their sins. The rigors of following those laws must have been exhausting! So many do’s and don’ts to remember and live by, and no matter how hard they tried, they would always fall short of God’s perfect standard.

But God made a promise: He would one day pay the ultimate price so that we could stand before him, purified and redeemed forever. He would make the ultimate sacrifice by giving his one and only Son to die on our behalf, saving us forever from our sins. And with the shedding of the Savior’s blood, the continuous sacrifices would no longer be necessary. We would be cleansed before him, forever! Our perfect union would be restored, though we would have to wait a little longer to talk to him face to face.

ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY

After Adam and Eve sinned and God promised in Genesis 3:15 that he would one day hold ultimate victory over sin through the promised Messiah, his great love was broadcast to mankind for all history. Through this sacrifice — the death of his Son, Jesus — perfect love would be lived out for all mankind.

With Jesus’ sacrifice, we weren’t only redeemed (as if that wasn’t enough!). We were also given the chance to be adopted into God’s family.

Ephesians 1:5 says, “God *decided in advance* to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure” (emphasis added). Our adoption into his family wasn’t a spur-of-the-moment decision; it was something that he decided a long time ago. God knew that mankind would sin, and he knew that sin would mean our separation from him. But he


also knew that he had a bigger plan, and that he would reign victorious over sin and restore us to our perfect relationship with him.

If God, the Creator of the universe, not only was willing to give up his Son so that we could be redeemed but also then adopted us into his eternal family, don’t you think he’d have a plan for each one of us? Now it’s just a matter of us understanding what that purpose is.



POINTS TO PONDER

- What thoughts and feelings are stirred within you when you contemplate the fact that you’re adopted into God’s eternal family? What does the significance of that adoption mean to you personally?
- As an heir of Christ, do you believe that God has a plan for your life? How do you tangibly feel the depth of his love for you, like the way a father or mother loves their children?



Everything
— WAS MADE WITH —
THE PURPOSE OF POINTING
OUR hearts AND minds
BACK TO OUR CREATOR.
THAT IS THE WHOLE REASON WHY
WE EXIST.

*Let the whole world glorify the LORD; let
it sing his praise.*

— Isaiah 42:12

*The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship. Day
after day they continue to speak; night
after night they make him known. They
speak without a sound or word; their
voice is never heard. Yet their message
has gone throughout the earth, and
their words to all the world.*

— Psalm 19:1-4


DISCOVERING OUR PURPOSE

We've looked at our search for significance and the inherent desire that drives that life-long search.

We've seen how that search for meaning was tainted by sin, and we've seen how God's plan is to draw us back to himself through this innate drive for our lives to matter. We've also looked at how God has redeemed us through his Son, Jesus, and adopted us into his eternal family.

But how does that impact the purpose of our life? How does all this background and plan play into our significance?

Throughout Scripture, we see verse after verse declaring the glory of God. About *us* declaring

A person wearing a dark, ribbed sweater is holding a red Bible. The background is a soft, golden sunset over a body of water. The person's hands are visible, holding the Bible from the sides. The Bible has gold lettering on the spine that reads "SOLA SCRIPTURA".

the glory of God, about all of creation declaring the glory of God. Everything was made with the purpose of pointing our hearts and minds back to our Creator. That is the whole reason why we exist.

GLORIFYING GOD

This innate drive for glory brings our search for purpose and meaning back to God. Sin tainted that drive, and all too often we seek after our own glory and exaltation. But that's not why he created us — he created us for his glory, for his exaltation, for his splendor. And when we surrender our lives to him and choose to live for his glory rather than our own, we find our true purpose and meaning. We discover the significance we've always longed for. We can find satisfaction in the life he created us for — through a dynamic and active relationship with our Creator.

In his book “Desiring God,” John Piper sums it up well when he says, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.” And that's where we discover the purpose of our life — to bring God glory.

👉 POINTS TO PONDER

- 👉 Take a moment sometime today to search on the internet for verses that talk about glorifying God. It's a frequent topic throughout Scripture, and this consistent theme cannot be escaped or ignored.
- 👉 When you struggle with living for your own glory rather than God's, what are some things you can do to realign your heart and mind to the purpose and plan God has for your life?

DAY 5: THE FRUIT

As we seek his face and strive to live the lives he designed for us, the Holy Spirit will help us produce the kind of fruit we need to live significant lives:

LOVE JOY
PEACE
PATIENCE
KINDNESS FAITHFULNESS
GOODNESS GENTLENESS
AND SELF-CONTROL.

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ... But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!
– Galatians 5:16, 22-23

IT'S ALL ABOUT GRACE

As God's image-bearers, who are created to glorify him, it's easy to think that we have a long to-do list of things to accomplish in order to live the kind of life he desires for us. Surely we must do good things for God in return for all he's done for us, right?

Wrong! Salvation comes at a cost, but not our own — it was a cost that Jesus paid on our behalf. Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

God saved us by his grace, so it's important to note that you don't have to "do" anything for God. At least, not in the traditional sense that we might think of. God's not interested in you performing for him; he's interested in you seeking to give him glory, to be in relationship with him.

Let us tell you a story of two sisters. One sister works herself into a frenzy, making a big dinner for a special guest. She's too busy to stop and listen as he talks.

Meanwhile, her sister isn't doing anything to help her — she's just sitting at the guest's feet, soaking in every word he's saying! Doesn't the guest see that the first sister is doing all the work while her sister just sits there?

But no. The guest — Jesus himself — gently rebukes her. He says to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42).

The first sister, Martha, was a "doer." She felt like she had to do something for Jesus. Many of us fall into the same trap, feeling like we somehow need to earn the salvation that was given to us. But we need to be more like the second sister, Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus and basking in his presence. It's when we're with him, listening to him, that we discover the life he planned for us.

PRODUCING GOOD FRUIT

So how do we work on not focusing on the "doing" but more on being in God's presence? How do we work on being in tune with him and his plan for our life, when our tendency is to get caught up in being busy "for" God?

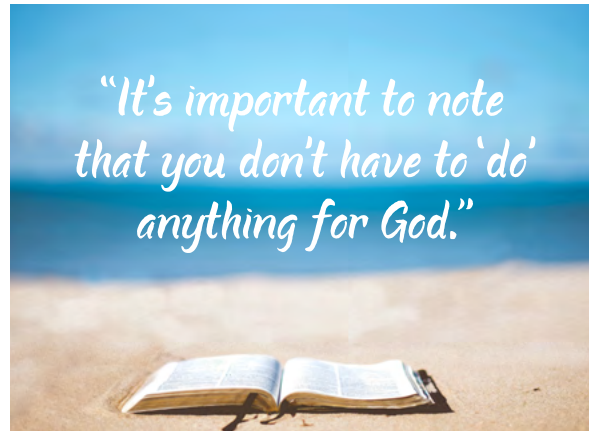
It starts with being in tune with the Holy Spirit. If you grew up in Sunday school, you likely learned the "fruit of the Spirit" song and memorized Galatians 5:22-23 at a young age. That verse provides us with a practical

list of the very characteristics that God wishes to instill in us for his glory.

But it's easy to legalize this verse and think that we have to "do" things in order to "earn" these characteristics, almost as if we were earning a badge in Cub Scouts. But that's not how it works! When we're walking with God, being in relationship with him and listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, he will

produce this fruit in our lives. It's a result of his hand at work in our lives.

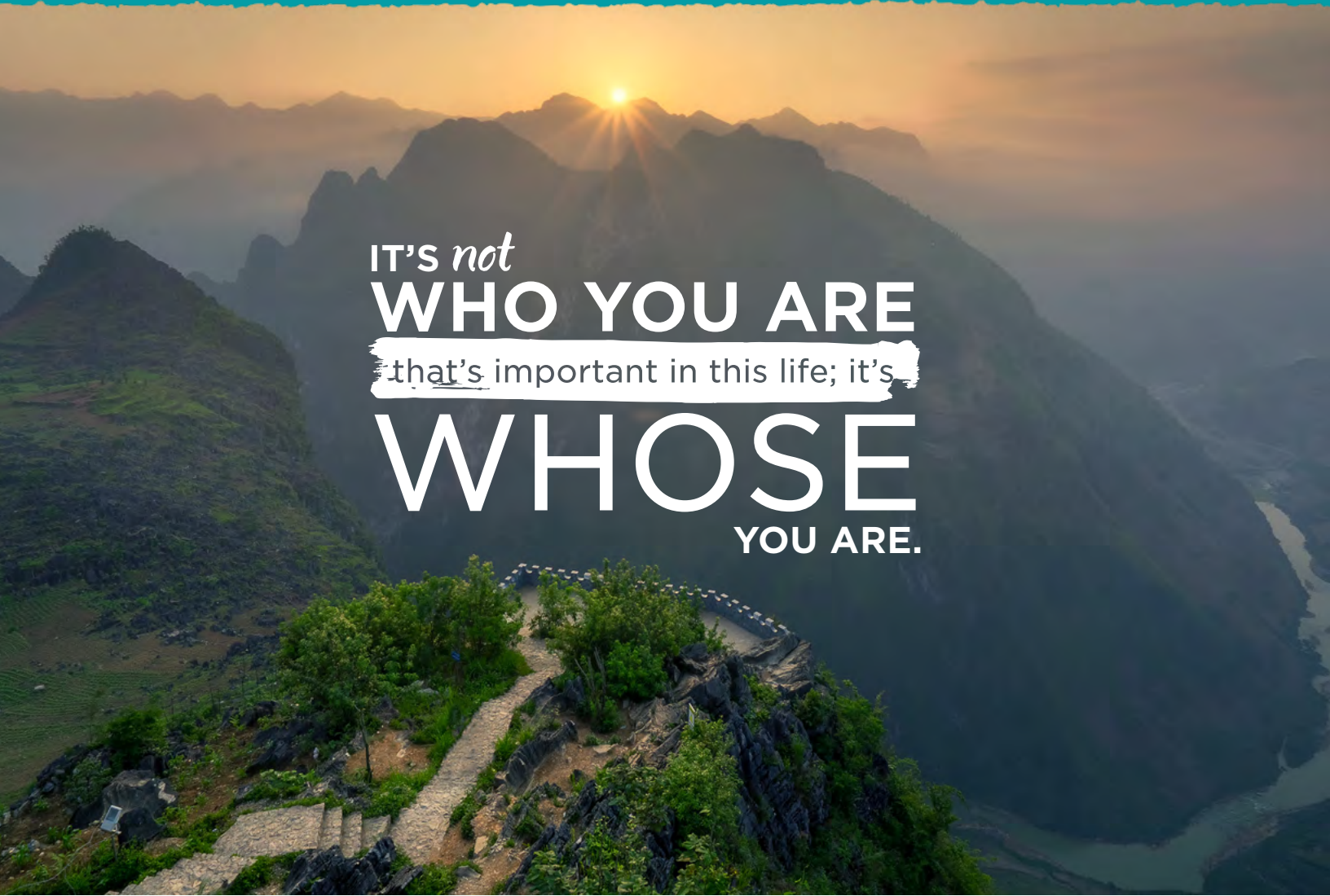
As we seek his face and strive to live the lives he designed for us, the Holy Spirit will help us produce the kind of fruit we need to live significant lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That's all the "doing" we need to strive for: to allow him to work within us to produce the fruit that he designed us to produce, as a reflection of his own character. Once again, we see God's innate design for us to bring him glory — through what he does in us.



👉 POINTS TO PONDER

- 👉 Do you find yourself being a Martha or a Mary? If you're more like Martha, how can you become more like Mary in your relationship with God? If you're more like Mary, is there anything you need to be on guard against that could cause you to move your focus off of Jesus?
- 👉 What fruits of the spirit do you find easier to practice than others? Ask the Holy Spirit to continue to produce these fruits in your life, for his glory.

DAY 6: THE UNEXPECTED



IT'S *not*
WHO YOU ARE
that's important in this life; it's
WHOSE
YOU ARE.

Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things as counted nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

– 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

THROUGH GOD'S EYES

When you think of people who have lived a meaningful life and made a difference, who comes to mind? Maybe you think of world changers like Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein or Bill Gates. Depending on your perception and lens of what is important, you'll likely be able to think of a number of people you would define as "world changers," or those whose lives have mattered.

We often view these people as "heroes," whether we'd call them that or not. These people have done things that we admire and look up to. They're everything we want to be — important, noteworthy and significant. They've done something with their lives.

But God doesn't view people the way we do, through a lens only of what they have or haven't accomplished. He views them as they can be, through his might and power. He views them through his own reflection, as the living (although marred) mirror of him that we are. Because to God, we have unlimited potential — through him.

Let's take a look at some unlikely characters that God used for his glory, even though they might have been the last pick we'd make for our dodgeball team. And maybe once you begin to look at these people the way God saw them, flaws and all, you'll see that he can use you in significant ways too.

UNLIKELY HEROES

Sarah — *old, barren, and doubtful.*

Sarah was 90 years old when she gave birth to her one and only son, Isaac. Ninety years old! Back in Bible times, a major factor in the significance and purpose of a woman was her ability to provide an heir to her husband to continue the family line. But for all those years, Sarah had been barren. Finally, when it seemed like all hope was lost, when she should have been watching her great-grandchildren run around her, God made Abraham a promise: He would become the father of a great nation — through Sarah. She even laughed when she overheard the angel of the Lord promise Abraham this! Yet despite her doubt and her old age, God chose to use Sarah to be the mother of Isaac. And with the birth of her son, God began to fulfill his promise to Abraham that his descendants would outnumber the grains of sand on the seashore or the stars in the night sky. (You can read the full story of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 17:15-18:15.)

Moses — *fearful, poor speaker, and full of excuses.*

Moses was fearful and a poor speaker (he even had a speech impediment!) and yet God still decided to use him to free the Israelite slaves from their Egyptian masters. Moses tried excuse after excuse to talk God out of sending him as his spokesperson to Pharaoh, but for every excuse, God had an answer. He was going to use Moses to accomplish his will — imperfections, impediments, and all. And ultimately he did, even though Moses was weak and broken and even disobeyed God at times. (You can read the full story of Moses' recruitment in Exodus 3:1-4:17.)

Gideon — *weak, least important, and doubtful.*

Gideon was from the tribe of Manasseh (the weakest of the 12 tribes of Israel) and he was the least important person in his family — he said so himself! He seemed like a strange choice to help rescue Israel from the Midianites, and he even questioned God several times on it. Still doubtful that he was the right choice and that God would actually help him, Gideon asked for a couple of signs. It took quite a bit of work to convince him, but with every sign God gave, he once again proved that Gideon was his choice — even though it meant a nerve-wracking step of faith for Gideon as God reduced his army to a mere 300 men! (You can read the full story of Gideon's encounter with God and his time as Israel's judge in Judges 6-8.)

All of these people were chosen by God for his glory, whether they felt equipped, adequate and sufficient or not. The point is, it's not who you are that's important in this life; it's whose you are. And if you're willing to step out and obey God, even when it seems scary, he's going to help you find that significance and purpose you so desperately crave. After all, he created you with that desire as a way of pointing you back to him as the source of all that you need! As you can see, God doesn't choose us based on what we do or even who we are; he chooses us for his glory.



- When you're looking at people the way God sees them, do any unlikely heroes in your own life come to mind?
- What encouragement can you find in knowing that God doesn't choose us based on what we do or who we are, but rather on what he can do through us? Does this help you better live out the life and purpose he has given you?

DAY 7: THE COMMISSION

Be a light
to the world.

Go and make
disciples.

Go and share
the hope that you have

in
Christ.

*Therefore, go and make disciples
of all the nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father and
the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach
these new disciples to obey all
the commands I have given you.
And be sure of this: I am with you
always, even to the end of the age.*

– Matthew 28:19-20

HEARING THE CALL

God has designed us with a purpose and a plan — to be his image-bearers, to bring him glory and to let that glory be known to the nations. And one of the ways we do that is by answering the command Jesus gave us before he returned to heaven, which is often known as the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19-20 is a commonly quoted verse, particularly among mission organizations that are inviting and inspiring others to join in with them. It might seem like a cliché verse (and that's probably because we sometimes feel it's overused), but it's not. In the Gospel of Matthew, these are the last recorded words of Jesus — this

command must be something he wants us to listen to closely and obey!

But what does it look like practically to live this out? Do we all have to move to a foreign country in order to obey Jesus' command?

THE COMMAND TO MAKE DISCIPLES

When people read Matthew 28:19-20, there are two common responses: either become a missionary or stay at home and support the missionary through finances or prayer. Some people view one as more important than the other, but the truth of the matter is that we're all meant to go and make disciples. However, that doesn't mean we all have to pack our bags and move overseas. We can make disciples of Jesus right in our own backyard.

People all over the world need to hear of Jesus — those both near and far. And as followers of Jesus, we have a role to play in ensuring that people hear the gospel for themselves. In Matthew 5:14-15, we see Jesus telling his disciples: "You are the light of the world — like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house."

Wherever we are — the grocery store, our kid's soccer game, our job or our neighborhood — we are called to be a light. That's a significant part of answering the Great Commission, because we're being living examples of the message of the gospel. We're meant to be the hands and feet of Jesus, and shining his light for the world to see is a vital part of that calling.

As we shine the light of Jesus, we need to remember that both our neighbors and those living on the other side of the world all need to hear about God. And

yes, while the need may seem greater for the people groups around the world who don't have one word of the gospel in their own language, those in our everyday lives still need to hear the gospel too. They need living representations of who God is, displayed for them in practical, tangible ways.

So as you live your life for God's glory, bearing his image and living as an adopted child and heir, what are you doing to share that understanding of significance with the world around you? Are you helping bring light and hope to those who still wander in darkness? Are you helping point people to the only source of significance and meaning that will truly satisfy their unquenchable thirst for something more, for their lives to mean something?

Be a light to the world. Go and make disciples. Go and share the hope that you have in Christ. Be an image-bearer who points others back to God — because they too are desperately searching for him, and you can be a living testimony of his hand at work in your life. Just let him use you for his glory. That's when you'll find the significance and purpose your heart so desperately longs for.



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👉 POINTS TO PONDER

- 👉 How can I be the hands and feet of Jesus to today? Who needs to experience the light of Christ shining brightly in their life?
- 👉 In what ways can I live out Jesus' command to make disciples in my own corner of the world? And how can I become involved in answering that calling for the nations too?