

Vital Signs

Created to Believe

March 30, 2025



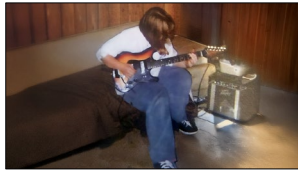
Today we're examining *how we live to reveal what we believe*. Cuz, as Bruce said last week, we're *all gonna* stand before the throne of *Christ* and we're *all gonna* give an *account* for *how* we lived *our life*! And *that* discussion will involve *how well* we fulfilled the *five created purposes* we all share: *believing, belonging, becoming, branching, and bestowing*. And since the *stakes* are so *high* and the *subjects* are so *deep* – we're starting a little *series* to *assess* our *progress* toward each *purpose*. And *today* we're diving *deeper* into what we *believe*. But because there's a self-serving *bias* in *how* we *perceive* what we *believe*, we need to ask the more *direct* question *behind* that question: **What's at the center of your life?**



Because *everyone* has to live *for something* – because something has to *give* our life *purpose*. Because **purpose is a uniquely human need that begins with belief**. No *cow* has ever questioned *its existence*, *failed* to find *meaning*, and *lost* its *will to live* – but *every human* needs to *believe* in *something* that gives them a *reason* to get out of bed *every morning*.



And what we believe *doesn't* have to be *spiritual, intellectual, or even rational* – it just has to feed our *appetite* for *purpose enough* to make life *worth living*. For me, I remember how just the *thought* of being a *rockstar* was enough motivation to *tolerate* the rest of my *misery*. So I grew out my *hair*, practiced *guitar*, and started *bands* to *make* myself *believe* in the *reality* of my *reason*. And slowly, I grew *more* and *more* *faith* that *music* was my *purpose* – and that *it* would *reward* me with *fame* and *fortune* if I just made *it* the *center* of my *life*.



Cuz whether it's an *object*, an *achievement*, a *profession*, or a *person* – **we all believe something exists that will reward us with purpose when we faithfully pursue it!** And *that's* because *it's true*... but only in *one case*:

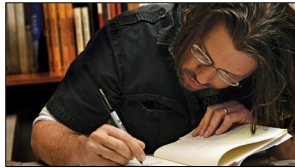
Without *faith* it is impossible to please *God*, because anyone who comes to *Him* *must believe* that *He* exists and that *He* rewards those who earnestly *seek Him*. – Hebrews 11:6 NIV

Y'see, regardless of *what* we *believe* gives us *purpose*, we *can* all *agree* that we need to *believe* we *have* a *purpose* – but **God says He created us with a need to believe for a purpose**. Cuz:

He *Himself* gives everyone life and breath and *everything else* ... and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. **[But,] God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him** – Acts 17:25, 27 NIV

For He chose us in *Him* before the creation of the world *to be holy and blameless* in His sight. In love He predestined us **[believers]** for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will – Ephesians 1:4-5 NIV

You get it? It's easier than it sounds; **believing in God's purpose is the purpose of being created to believe.** That is, He designed us with an *appetite to believe in something* so we'd see only He has something *worth* believing. Cuz He offers *adoption* back into the family we were *born to be in!*



However, because we live in a world full of *other* things that *also* promise to *fulfill* our purpose, **we get distracted by different pursuits**, hoping *they'll* lead us where *we belong*. Yet our constant *searching* through *all* of human *history* should be a *clear sign* that *this world can't* provide what we want. And this idea was echoed by award-winning, best-selling novelist David Foster Wallace, who *lost* his life-long struggle to *find* that reason in 2008 when he committed suicide. And though he *considered* making *Jesus* his reason *twice*, he couldn't *let go* of this world's constant *letdowns* – which he hinted at, in a now- famous *commencement* speech:

“There is actually no such thing as atheism ... Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And ... pretty much anything you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things ... then you will never have enough ... Worship your own body ... and you will always feel ugly ... Worship power [and] you will feel weak and afraid ... Worship your intellect, ... [and] you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out.”

Cuz the bottom line is this: **believing this world can fulfill us only leads to disappointment and death.** And *that's* because the *only* purpose *worth* believing is found *outside* this world – *in a* relationship with *God*. After all, real *fulfillment* can only come from satisfying a *created purpose* – and if we are *created* beings, *logically*, **only our Creator knows the real reason we were made!** And without *His reason* at the center of *our lives*, we're all *doomed* to the *despair* of *dysfunction*. Cuz the same way it would be annoying to use a *clarinet* as a *spoon* – it would be *frustrating* for *Mozart* to waste his life *digging ditches*. So, **we need to reconnect with our Creator to align with His intentions.**

But, since our fundamental problem stems from the *separation* that *began* when we parted ways with our Creator, **He had to let us learn to return on our own terms**, however *painful* the process:

For the creation was subjected to *frustration*, not by its own choice, but by the will of the *One* who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. – Romans 8:20-21 NIV



God allows us to believe lies so the mistakes can turn us back toward truth. It's like the *father* who urged the *prodigal son* to *stay home* but still *let* him foolishly chase *worldly fulfillment* – hoping that the *letdown* would bring him *back* where he *belonged*. Well, we too need to *learn* that only the *Lord* knows the *right* way to lead *our* life.

Cuz **faith in our Father is the only belief that can lead us back where we belong.** We must learn to *trust* Him enough to *involve* Him in *every* decision and *believe* all *His answers*.

Cuz that's what kids should do, and He said we were created to be His kids. Remember, "**He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ**" Cuz *Christ modeled the power of believing in God's purpose for our lives – by proving that His love conquers all – even death!* Because *spoiler alert – we were created to be loved.* That's what we have to *believe!* And only when we *believe we're beloved* will we *be living* out our purpose. Cuz when God wanted to fully express His love – He made *YOU* to do it! So don't you ever forget: *we were all made for Him.*

[Like John said:] You [God] created all things, and *by Your will* they were created and have their being. [and God didn't *have to create us, He wanted to create us*] – Revelation 4:11 NIV

For the LORD takes *delight* in His people – Psalms 149:4 NIV



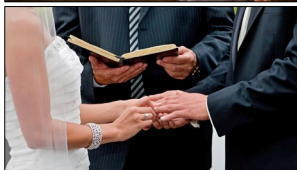
The same way **we take delight in the people we create when we decide to have kids.** For instance, even though *Rayna* and I would be *perfectly happy* with just the *two* of us, we thought it would be *delightful* to fill our house with *more* humans. And for the *most part*, we were *right!* Loving *our kids* has brought *us* loads of *joy* and *hopefully*, one day it'll bring *them* joy too. They just need to learn to *believe* that *love* can *feel* like torture sometimes! But then again, *so do we!*



Because one of the biggest *obstructions* to *our* belief in *God's* love is all the *suffering* we feel. But like *our own kids*, **suffering only discourages those who doubt their parent's heart.** Cuz if we *truly believed* in *God's* purpose, we'd *trust* that His *love* was behind everything *we* experience – including the *rough stuff!* Just like *kids* should know *chores, bedtimes*, and *vegetables* are all part of *their parents'* love – in spite of *how it feels.*



So, even though it can be hard to believe that we *were* created for an *eternal, loving* relationship that brings perfect joy to *everyone* involved – remember, **we have to believe in God's love to take part in God's love.**



Think about it, you *won't have* a happy marriage if you *don't trust* your spouse's vows; so, likewise, **we can't enjoy God's plan without first believing in His promise.** So thank the Lord that *Jesus* came and *proved* God's promise of *eternal adoption* was *worth trusting!*

The Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true. And we are in Him who is true by being in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. [So,] Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. – 1 John 5:18-21 NIV



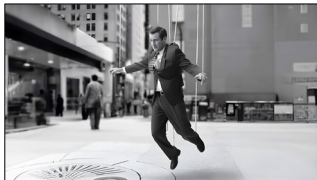
When Jesus came, we were given a tangible example of the value of God's love – by seeing its *effect* as the *center* of our life. And that's an enormous *help* when we decide what to *worship.* Cuz again, **what we believe in decides how we turn out.** In fact, you know where we get the *word* worship? It's just an old English mashup of '*worth*' and '*shape*'.

Worship literally means *worth's shape* or the *shaping of worth.* **Your worship is what you think and feel represents value itself;** it's what you *give* to things *you* deem *worthy.*

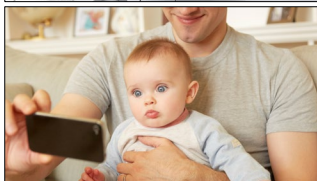
Because as we all know, worship's *main meaning* manifests in its *action*. In fact, the Bible's Hebrew and Greek words for worship mean to *bow*, *prostrate*, or *serve* – cuz worship is something you 'do' in *response* to something you *value*. **Worship means letting something's worth shape you.** It means somehow *changing yourself* to *acknowledge* and *accommodate* something *else* that has great *value to you*.



So, stop and think about it; **what are you letting change you?** Has the way you value *money* influenced any of *your* decisions? How about the importance of your *career*? Does *it* have an affect on *your* daily life? What *weight* do you give to people's *approval*? Or *your* authority?



Because **what you value will determine how you do you.** And whether it's a *person* that you tell, **"You are my whole world! You're my reason for living!"** or a *possession* that makes you feel, **"This will complete me. This will fix all my problems!"** – believing that *either* are *worthy* enough to let them *shape* you – is *worship*. You might not *call* it that, but when you give something in your life the power to *change* you, you've begun a *worship* relationship. And the *higher* the *value*, the *harder* it is to *contain* the *change* – so **make sure what you give your worship gives you your real purpose** – cuz there's only room for *one* at the *center* of *your* *life*!



[So, as Paul says:] Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of *God's* *mercy*, to offer *your* bodies as a *living* sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. – Romans 12:1 NIV

So, **what's at the center of your life?** Whatever your *answer*, *that's* the object of your *worship*. Cuz **when we believe that something can give us purpose, we give it our life.** And like David Foster Wallace said, **"Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship."**

But **the very fact that we were all born with that need to believe should be seen as a conspicuous clue to turn us toward a Creator.** Because if God *has* given us the *capacity* for *faith* – but *also* the *free will* to *misplace* our *faith* – it's only *logical* that **part of our purpose is to choose what we believe.** And while believing in the *empty promises* of *worldly idols* has *always* proven to *let us down*, Jesus proved that believing in *God* produces a love that fulfills our *deepest desires*.

Because when we believe in *God*, it's not *just* an *intellectual decision*, it's a *humble recognition* that **only our Creator truly knows how we're meant to live.** And the *moment* we *choose* to *let Him* *lead*, everything changes – we find our way back to the *path* we were created to *walk* and discover that *faithfully following* leads us to the life-changing *love* we *see* we *need*. And when we *respond* with *worship*, **we let His love shape us into the eternal family we were meant to be.** Cuz God created us to *be* loved, to *know* we're loved, and to be *driven* by His love – but that all begins with *believing* in His love. Cuz only *that* belief fulfills our created *purpose* when *it* becomes the center of *our* *life*.

[So, as John says:] Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God ... because God is love. – 1 John 4:7-8 NIV