

Rooted Week 7: How to Make the Most of Your Life

Let me start with a really big question this morning. What is your purpose in life? Why are you on this planet? This is the existential question. The big why. **Why am I here?**

The very existence of the question assumes there is a why. It assumes we have a purpose, there is a point to your existence, and that I am here for a reason.

This is important, because if Darwinian evolution is true, that we have no purpose? There is no reason for our existence other than being the chance products of biological processes and chemical reactions. Our lives have no meaning other than to use energy and produce more chemical reactions.

But we have an instinctive longing and understanding that there is more to our lives than what is happening at a cellular and molecular level. We want our lives to mean more. We need our lives to mean more. And we know way deep down in our knower that something matters and it matters ultimately.

So, if you asked most people this question— why are you here? What sort of answers would you get? I think many people would say something along these lines: my purpose in life is to be happy— to do whatever I can do to make my life happier. Of course, this comes in different shapes and sizes.

Is our purpose merely to fill our life with experiences, to make memories and have friends? Is our purpose to make money so we can acquire more and nicer things? Is life's meaning found in the work itself, the sense of achievement, to make or manage something with skill and accomplishment, to create something that outlasts our few decades on this planet? Is our purpose to learn? Is meaning found in knowledge, so we educate ourselves and the more knowledge we have the more fulfilled we will be?

Now, let me ask a much smaller question – why did we do what we did last Sunday?

Last Sunday was Serve Sunday. We had about 60 of us out there pulling weeds, writing cards, cleaning windows, and wrestling landscape timbers. Thanks to all of you who helped out. Let me say, it felt really good to get out there and do something for others. The last two years, we've circled wagons, and we became very inwardly focused. We needed this reminder that it's not all about us.

You see, we're not just talking about last Sunday. We're talking about all of life. Why do we serve anyone anytime? Why do we as a church need to be outwardly focused? And why do we as individual Christians need to remember it's not about me?

You see the answers to these two questions— the big question of “why am I here?” and the smaller question of “why did we do what we did last Sunday?” really go hand in hand. Jesus

has called you to reach more than your potential. He's called you to more than just fulfilling yourself.

Jesus doesn't just save us from our sin. His mission didn't end at the cross or even the empty tomb. He has given us a new life. He's given us new reason to live. He has called us to partner with him in changing the world. He doesn't just want to make sure you have a place with him in heaven when you die. He calls us to manifest his redemption and restoration in this world.

Here is how they ask the question in our *Rooted* book, "How can I make the most of my life?" A key part of that answer has to do with using the gifts that God gave us to demonstrate his love to others. You and I are here to serve. Here's what we read in 1 Peter 4:10-11:

¹⁰ *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.* ¹¹ *If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

I. We all Have Gifts

The first thing we learn is we all have gifts. Every Christ-follower, upon the moment of his or her salvation receives a special giftedness from God. Not only that, but your gift was given by God just for you. He gave you exactly what you need to do exactly what He's called you to do.

Hear this in verse 10, "*Each of you.*" That's how many of us? That's which of us? That's all of us. Not just the preachers. Not just worship leaders or missionaries. Not just the elders. "*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received...*"

Just think! The sovereign God of the universe, the same God who placed supergiant stars hundreds of millions of miles in diameter in space, the same God who placed our perfectly sized planet in orbit at a perfect speed in a perfect rotation the perfect distance from a perfectly sized star that burns at a perfect temperature to support life. On that planet He put the perfect atmosphere and the exact balance of elements for all of us to live. That God is the very same God who has spiritually gifted you, and He did so with the same skill, wisdom, love and perfection that He did all of those other things. And He has done this for each of us in the church so that Son-Rise has everything it needs to do all that God has called us to do.

We all have gifts, but we all have different gifts. We are not all gifted in the same way. Our gifts come as it says here, "*in various forms.*" You are gifted to do things I can't do. You are gifted in ways that are unique from your mom or your dad or your spouse or your best friend. We waste so much energy on comparing and competing with each other, instead of completing and supplementing each other.

There are things you can do. There are things I can do. But what we can do together in partnership with God? That is far more than the sum of our abilities. We saw this at play last

Sunday. We did project that if you were doing it on your own would take you all weekend to do, but together we knocked them out in just a couple of hours. That's the power of together.

II. Our Gifts Serve Others

Second thing I want you to notice is why God gave us these gifts. Peter writes, *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to" . . . what? "To Serve others."*

Our giftedness isn't about fulfilling ourselves. It isn't about showing off or impressing others with how spiritual we are. We aren't earning bonus points for heaven. God has not gifted us to serve ourselves.

Using your gift is not an opportunity to advance yourself, your image, your agenda, or your ego in any way. Whenever we try to shine the spotlight on ourselves rather than on God, things go sideways real quick. Successful minister of a growing church gets his doctorate and insists that everyone calls him doctor. He puts it on his door badge. He puts it on the nameplate on his desk. He puts up a sign in the church parking lot. Soon the church is torn apart by division and strife. Now I wouldn't say the pastor's pride was the cause, but it also wasn't merely coincidental.

A talented keyboardist is invited play in the worship band at a major Christian conference. She refuses when she learns that she'll have to share time behind the ivories with another gifted instrumentalist. Soon the talk of the conference is the jilted performer rather than ministry. God gave spiritual gifts to build up the body, not the self.

The church in Corinth had a real problem with this. For so many of them, their spiritual gift became a matter of bragging arrogance. My gift is better than yours. I'm more important than you. I'm more spiritual than they are. So, Paul reminds them that God is behind all the gifts. He says, *"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them...in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."*

He compares everyone in the church to the different parts of a body— a foot, a hand, and ear, an eye. He says that no one part is more important than the others. They are all needed, and they must all work together. Every part of the body serves the other parts. When the feet step, they are moving the hands, the ears, the eyes. When the eyes see, they are guiding the feet where to go, helping the hands know what to do.

Serving is part of our core identity. Serving is essential to who we are and why we are here. Think of Serve Sunday as an exclamation point that emphasizes the fact that this is why we are here.

We tend to see "service" as an add-on. It's an optional extra tacked on required duties of life that gives us a little extra credit. With my daughters in their pursuit of scholarships, and fulfillment of honors programs there was always a minimum number of hours of community

service. Each semester, you have to complete X number of hours, to meet the requirements of the program.

To win the scholarship, you had to list all the things you did to serve the community. My daughter was like, “Dad, does serving in the nursery count as community service?” I’m like, “Sure, it counts, but that’s not why you serve in the nursery.”

Some of us approach it from the other end. If you get caught doing something bad, you will be assigned community service. You perform X number of hours of service and this bad mark will be taken off your record. This sees service as something you do to work off the bad you do, or even worse, it sees service as a punishment.

When we talk about serving others as followers of Christ, this is not what we’re talking about. You’re a Christian, so you need to go to church, you need to pray, you should read your Bible, and, oh, don’t forget to put in two hours of community service.

Now, we all serve in different ways. Peter breaks it down as two different kinds or categories of gifts. He talks about speaking gifts and serving gifts. Both kinds of gifts serve others, but they do it in different ways.

The speaking gifts include things like teaching, prophecy, evangelism, words of wisdom and knowledge. You’ll find believers with speaking gifts as preachers and teachers. These are brothers and sisters who can sit down with you in a moment of crisis and they always seem to know the right thing to say. You can go to them when facing a crucial decision and they always bring a supernatural measure of wisdom to the question, a spiritual perspective that cuts through the fog of uncertainty.

Peter also says there are serving gifts. The serving gifts would be things like the gifts of serving, giving, administration, mercy, and discernment. You might not always see this people up front or in the spotlight. You might find them working in the office, or the kitchen or writing cards at their dining room table, they might be taking groceries to a needy family, or fixing the leaky pipe in the women’s restroom. They are just as essential to the ministry of the church. The church could not exist without them.

But our gifts aren’t just about serving other people. There’s an even greater audience.

III. Our Gifts Bring Glory to God

The third thing we see in these verses here in 1 Peter is that our gifts bring glory to God. In verse 11, Peter talks about using our gifts to speak as one who speaks the very words of God; of serving with the strength God provides, “*so that in all thing God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*” Using our gifts to serve others brings praise and glory to God. Serving is an act of worship because it shines the light on Him.

If you go to a big stadium concert, they are a sight to see. Giant HD screens, laser lights and stage lights all choreographed to the music. It's quite a production. But in almost every show you get to a point the stage lights are turned off. No lasers are dancing around the arena. The screen goes dark. In fact, everything but the emergency exit lights are off. Then the artist will tell the crowd to get out their phone and turn on their flashlight.

One little cell phone light does nothing to light up a stadium. 10 little cell phone lights don't make a dent, but you turn on 50,000 of them, and now you have a spectacular display. You can see the artist on the stage quite clearly.

One believer using their gift to serve others is just a pin prick of light. All believers using their gifts to serve others is a spectacular display, and it shines brilliant light on God, and it brings Him glory.

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus tells us, *"In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."* Notice in this statement, that we are not giving God the glory directly. By letting our lights shine; it results in others giving God glory.

Think of how an oil lamp shines. When the lamp is lit; it shines. It can't help but shine. It doesn't have to try to shine. It doesn't expend a great effort to shine. It simply draws on the oil and it shines. For anyone there, the light brightens the room, it illuminates their way, and it helps them see. They are thankful for the light. They enjoy its brilliance and warmth and they admire its beauty. The candle doesn't give the glory directly. The people who benefit from the candle give the glory.

That's the nature of glory. It's a side-effect. It's the spillover of living the life God has called you to live. We'll often say in the church that our purpose in life is to glorify God, and that's true, but then we equate giving God glory with expressing singing in a church service and volunteering at church. Those things are important. But that's not the primary thing that brings glory to God. You glorify God when you live your life in such a good and beautiful way that people you serve give God glory.

When a painting is beautiful, it doesn't need a banner on it proclaiming how great the painter is. Those moved by the beauty of the painting naturally give glory to the artist. The art doesn't give the glory; those moved by the art give the glory.

God is the artist. You are the art. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10, *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* Jesus says in John 15:8, *"My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit."* God is the artist. You are the art. Go out and be beautiful.