

BELIEF IN GOD - PART TWO

ANOTHER REASON IT MAKE SENSE TO BELIEVE IN GOD?

Because God gives us purpose in life.

Let's consider this question:

WHY AM I HERE AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY LIFE?

When you believe in God and follow his word you can have a clear purpose for your life. You can have hope, joy and confidence that, no matter what happens, it will be okay. You can even have hope in death because you know that you have followed God's purpose for your life and that there will be a resurrection.

We will start with **Proverbs 11: 28**, "*Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.*" Then let's look at **Jeremiah 17: 7-8**, "*But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.*" Those who follow the way of God will bear much fruit, but those who do not will dry up. We need to trust God to help us be fruitful in life rather than trusting in people. Consider these points about our purpose in life.¹ Why am I here?

1. To trust God and follow his will for our lives – Proverbs 3: 5-8 says, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.*" James 4: 15 says, "*Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'*" (See also Romans 12: 1-2). The Bible also says, "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*" (Matthew 6: 33).

2. To learn and understand certain fundamental truths about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

They hold everything together. Genesis 1: 1, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" Colossians 1: 15-20 says, "*He (referring to Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all*

¹ The main idea for these points is taken from Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Life* but, I have made many additions myself.

his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." The truth is that it is all about God and his plan, praise and glory, but it is also true that he uses us in his plan to accomplish his will and he wants to **bless us** and **use us to bless others**. We just need to remember that it is not about us getting praise, glory and power or riches. We need to remember what Jesus said in Mark 8: 35-37, *"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

3. We are here to know and follow God's plan for our lives. **Isaiah 44: 1, 2,** *"But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the LORD says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen."* (Jeshurun is a poetic reference to Israel.) These verses are about Israel but they are also about us because he formed us in the womb. He knows us and has a plan for us. These verses speak about this: **Psalm 138: 8,** *"The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever— do not abandon the works of your hands."* **Psalm 139: 15, 16,** *"My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."* **Acts 17: 26,** *"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."* **Ephesians 1: 4,** *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."* **James 1: 18,** *"He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."* **Jeremiah 29: 11.** *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* This verse is talking about Israel, but if we give our lives to God and follow Jesus, he will also prosper us.

4. As we follow God's plan, we need to be controlled by the right things. Is it possessions? Do you think that when you get a good job and have many things you will have life? Maybe you are doing what you are doing so you will gain the praise of men. Or is it fear that is driving your life? Are you afraid of others and afraid of being looked down upon? This could drive you to over work and live more to please others than God. Or maybe it is your lust for the things of others that is driving your life. Maybe it is anger or guilt that is driving your life. Maybe you are trying to make up for something you did earlier in life. None of these things really help us to live a joyful and productive life with God. We need a purpose which drives us that is good and pure. God has a good plan for us and, if we follow it, we will have true joy and peace. We will struggle every day to do his will, but we can keep going back to him to find a deep peace, joy and purpose. **Isaiah 26: 3** says, *"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal."*

We should be controlled by the Holy Spirit of God as **Ephesians 5: 17** says, *"Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."*

Maybe the past is controlling your life. Paul had this to say, "*Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus*" (**Philippians 3: 13, 14**). Maybe anxiety is controlling your life. The Bible says in **Philippians 4: 6-7**, "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" Maybe you love your life and all that surrounds it more than you should. Jesus said, "*The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life*" (John 12: 25).

5. To get ready for another life. **Ecclesiastes 3: 11** says, "*He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*" Jesus said in **John 5: 28, 29**, "*Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*" The Bible says in **1 Corinthians 15: 50-57**, "*I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Paul said in **2 Corinthians 5: 1-5**, "*Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*"

The Hebrew writer says in **Hebrews 13: 14**, "*For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*" So, as we are going forward in this life, we need to remember that there is another life beyond this one. If we know that there is another life besides this life, it will help us not get too pre-occupied down in the things of this world that have no meaning. Realizing that there actually is a judgment should also help us keep our lives on track. We need to also remember that the plans of the Lord will stand forever. **Psalms 33: 11** says, "*But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.*"

6. Since one purpose of our lives is to get ready for another life we should correct our lives quickly because life is short. We should follow God now while we have time. **Psalm 39: 4-7** says, *"Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath. Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it. 'But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.'* **Ecclesiastes 12: 1-8** says, *"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them.' "*

Here are some other verses about the shortness of life:

Psalm 102: 11, *"My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass."*

James 4: 13-17, *"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."* **We should never pretend that we have a long time on this earth because no one knows the day of his death.**

7. Life is a test. First it is a test for us according to these verses: **James 1: 12**, *"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."* Once God tested Hezekiah to see what was in his heart - **2 Chronicles 32: 31**, *"It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channeled the water down to the west side of the City of David. He succeeded in everything he undertook. But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart."* **Genesis 22: 1-18** tells the story of Abraham being tested by God telling him to sacrifice his son of the promise. Joseph, in the Old Testament times, went through many trials (Genesis chapters 37-50).

Also, God has left us here to see how we do as stewards. Jesus told a parable in **Mark 12: 1-11** that illustrates this point well, *"He then began to speak to them in parables: 'A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. 'He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Haven't you read this scripture: 'The stone the*

builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Paul said in **1 Corinthians 4: 2**, *"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."* We need to remember that everything we have has been given to us by God. He is the owner not us and he has entrusted us with all this. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4: 7, *"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"* So, we should take care of everything we have because God is the owner. If we are faithful with the little he has given to us, he will give us more. Jesus emphasized this in another parable where he speaks of a master entrusting some people with money. To the one who used his five talents to gain five more, *"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"* (Matthew 25: 21). But if we are not faithful and thankful for what we have now, how can God trust us with more? Jesus said in Luke 16: 10-12, *"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"*

God's purpose for our lives is also that we do good works in the name of Jesus. Speaking to Christians, the Bible says, in **Ephesians 2: 10**, *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

Andy Stanley, preacher at North Point church in Atlanta, Georgia made a great comment on this text. He unpacked this statement in this way, *"Don't let this slip by: You are his workmanship. Say it out loud, 'I am Gods workmanship.' Do you know what that means? It means you are the product of God's vision. God has decided what you could be and should be. You are the outcome of something God envisioned. And through Christ he has brought about, and continues to bring about, changes in you in accordance with his picture of what you could and should be. But his vision for you is not complete. You have a part. Look at the next phrase. We have been envisioned and then crafted for a particular purpose. And that purpose is to do good works which God has envisioned us doing. God has a vision for your life. That is, he has a mental image of what you could and should be as well as what you could and should do."*²

Knowing that we are part of a bigger story or larger plan of God's should give us excitement, passion and sense of purpose in our lives. I don't think any of us want to just go through the motions of life and at the end look back and say, "What purpose did my life really have?" We want to be able to look back with a sense of accomplishment and say that we fulfilled the purpose God intended for our lives.

8. To give God praise and Glory, please him in all we do and put our hope in him. Glory refers to the greatness, majesty, love, splendor and beauty of God for who he is and what he does. When we glorify God we acknowledge his greatness and praise and worship him. We glorify him by obeying him, recognizing his faithfulness, and holiness, and devoting our lives to him. We also glorify God by reflecting his goodness, love, and beauty in

² Andy Stanley, *Visioneering* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 1999) 13.

our own lives as we live for him and love others. **2 Corinthians 3: 18** says, *"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."* We are being changed day by day to be more like God. We can never become gods, as some religions say, but we can reflect God's glory more and more each day as we know him better and reflect his likeness in the way we relate to others.

1 Chronicles 16: 28-29 helps understand what it means to glorify God, *"Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength, ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness."* We come to God and glorify him by acknowledging him for who he already is – one who has glory and strength. Then we bring an offering to him and worship him. At that time the offering was an animal, grain, or birds. Today we offer our lives in obedience to him and service to others (Romans 12: 1-2).

Paul says in **Romans 11: 36**, *"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."*

Colossians 1: 16 says, *"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."*

1 Timothy 1: 17, *"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."*

Jude 24, 25, *"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."*

Revelation 4: 11, *"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."*

Psalms 119: 175, *"Let me live that I may praise you, and may your laws sustain me."*

Psalms 145: 3, *"Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom."*

We see the glory of God in Jesus according to **Hebrews 1: 3; 2**, *"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."*

2 Corinthians 4: 6, *"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."*

The purpose of our lives is then to praise God and give him glory in everything – **Isaiah 43: 7**, *"...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."* **Psalms 86: 9**, *"All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name."*

God planned for us to be holy and blameless in his sight. **Ephesians 1: 4-7** says, *"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 to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."*

We please God when we worship him in spirit and truth – **John 4: 23, 24**, *"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

We please him when we offer our bodies and our whole selves to God -- **Romans 12: 1, 2**, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

We please God when we worship him with a sincere heart in our lives – **Isaiah 29: 13**, *"The Lord says: 'These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.'"*

Referring to Judah **Jeremiah 3: 11** says, *"In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense, declares the Lord."*

We need to praise God. **Psalms 113: 3**, *"From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised."* Psalm 34: 1 says, *"I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips."*

We should do every good thing for the glory of God and like we were doing it for Jesus. Paul said in **1 Corinthians 10: 31**, *"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."* Colossians 3: 23 says, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men..."*

Let's think a little more in depth about **Romans 12: 1, 2** that says, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."* First, this verse talks about the compassion or mercy of God. God has mercy on us because we are all sinners. He should have anger, but when we turn to him he has compassion. Because of the blood of Jesus God has mercy on us and gives us salvation when we turn to him. As a result of this, we should give everything to God, our bodies, thoughts, plans and futures. We give our bodies to God so that everything we do with our bodies is pleasing to him. Our bodies then become a sacrifice offered to God. We should not abuse or misuse our bodies in any way. This is a worship that is about our everyday lives, not just one day a week. This passage also tells us not to follow the evil ways of the world. We are still in the world but we don't have to follow the ways of the world. We

should change our thinking by reading, studying and meditating on the word of God, through deep personal prayer and fellowship with other Christians. Reading good books can also help. When we do this, we will understand the will of God for our lives. This is true worship.

9. To follow the way of truth – Let's think about five eternal truths which are foundational to a Christian world view or Christian philosophy of life and the world.

(1) Things are not as they seem – Genesis 28: 16; Luke 24: 17-32; 2 Corinthians 4: 18. Matthew 23: 27, 28. 2 Corinthians 4: 18 says, *"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."* But we don't always remember this. Sometimes we think we are free, yet we are not – John 8: 31-47; Romans 6: 15-18. We also sometimes think that things are just physical, yet most are spiritual. Ephesians 6: 12 says, *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of the dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."* We often think we are in control, yet we are not – Pharaoh thought he was in control but he really was not (Exodus 9: 29; Colossians 1: 16, 17). Then sometimes we think we are succeeding when we are not. The Bible says in Mark 8: 36, 37, *"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul. Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

(2) There is a great battle going on –The Bible says in 1 Peter 5: 8,9, *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."* See also 1 Timothy 1: 18. But we sometimes don't understand this truth deeply enough. Sometimes we think people are the enemy – Ephesians 6: 12; Matthew 5: 43-47. We are sometimes spiritually asleep. The Bible says in Ephesians 5: 14, *"Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."* We are also sometimes spiritually blind (Matthew 23: 17-19; James 4: 7-10). The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4: 4, *"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."* We don't know the right weapons to use so we use the wrong ones (Ephesians 6: 10-18; Matthew 26: 52-54). We have been desensitized to evil, so we do not see the real battle. We think we can win on our own. Peter was confident that he would not fall away because he said, *"Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will"* (Matthew 26: 33). However, later he denied Jesus (Matthew 26: 69-75). Jesus said that without him we can do nothing (John 15: 5).

(3) We are critically wounded – We have already mentioned Romans 3: 22-26 in an earlier lesson but it would be good to think about these verses again here, *"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present*

time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." The problem is we often think we are well. The Bible speaks about the Pharisees in John 9: 35-41 pointing out that they thought they were okay, but Jesus says they were not okay because they were not willing to admit that they had a problem. Jesus said, *"If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains"* (John 9: 41). In reality, they were blind, but because they would not admit it, their guilt remained. They were too proud to see their own sin.

Another way to put it is that sometimes we are sick but we do not accept this and so we don't go to the doctor. Jesus said in Mark 2: 17, *"On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* The Pharisees were complaining that Jesus was eating with sinners. This shows that they did not consider themselves to be sinners, or in need of a doctor. Jesus went to those who admitted that they were sinners, and in need of a doctor, because he knew that they would be the ones who would respond to him.³

(4) We can be healed and play an important role – The Bible says in **1 Peter 2: 24-25**, speaking of Jesus, *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been **healed**. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."* Jesus says in **Matthew 11: 28-29**, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* Peter answered the people's question about what to do to be saved by saying, *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2: 38). Also, each person can play an important role in God's plan to save the world and help others mature in Christ if they use their gifts. The Bible says in **1 Peter 4: 10-11**, *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it 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."* God wants to use us also by spreading the gospel to every tribe, tongue and nation. Jesus said in **Matthew 28: 16-20**, *"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' "* The problem is that often we don't understand what God can do through us, and sometimes we are too preoccupied with the things of this earthly world rather than spiritual things. See also Acts 2: 38 which speaks of repentance, forgiveness, baptism and the Holy Spirit.

³ These first three main points were taken from John Eldredge's book, *Waking the Dead*.

(5) To find yourself you must lose yourself and look to God – Matthew 16: 21-28. The goal is not to get into yourself and understand yourself but to know God and then you will know yourself in the light of who God is and his full knowledge of you. The only way to know yourself and have true peace is through a deep relationship with God and Jesus. Paul tells us in Philippians 4: 6-7 that if we let God know our worries he can give us a peace that passes understanding. Wayne Bushnell said in one of his sermons, "Taking up your cross is not a condition you deal with. It is a choice you live with."

Other verses to read: John 5: 24; 14: 6; Galatians 3: 26-29; Romans 6: 1-14; 12: 1-2; 1 John 2: 15-17; 3: 11-20; Romans 15: 7; 2 Corinthians 2: 14-17; 3: 18; 4: 15; Philippians 1: 9-11; Isaiah 49: 6; John 12: 25.

10. To become friends with God – The Bible says that when we are outside of Christ and following the way of sin, we are God's enemies, Romans 5: 10, *"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more having been reconciled shall we be saved through his life!"* But we can become friends with God if we believe in Jesus, repent and are baptized.

James 2: 23 says, *"You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone."*

Jesus spoke to his disciples these words in **John 15: 14, 15**, *"You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."*

We become friends with God by being obedient to him. This includes spending time with Him like Jesus did. **Mark 1: 35** gives us an example of Jesus' prayer life. It says, *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."* **Luke 6: 12** gives another insight into how important prayer was for Jesus. It tells us that, *"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God."*

Let's think about these verses in **Psalms 119** that remind us how important the word of God is.

Verse 11, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*

Verse 27, *"Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders."*

Verse 72, *"The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold."*

Verse 97, *"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long."*

Verse 105, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."*

Verse 147, *"I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word."*

Verse 175, *"Let me live that I may praise you, and may your laws sustain me."*

11. To be in fellowship. First God wants to draw us into the fellowship of the Trinity. God has an eternal fellowship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. God wants us to share in this fellowship with him and share in the fellowship with others who are also in fellowship with him. The Trinity is about our fellowship in the church because they are three in one and one in three in perfect fellowship. God planned long ago that there would be this kind of fellowship. The Bible says in Ephesians 3: 10, *"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Ephesians 3: 10, 11). When we are in fellowship with others in love, we are like God or the Trinity because they are in fellowship in love. The Trinity draws us into fellowship with them through the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel so that we can share in their fellowship. The Bible says in 1 John 1: 1-7, *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."*

The Bible also includes the Holy Spirit of God in this fellowship in 2 Corinthians 13: 14, *"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the **fellowship of the Holy Spirit** be with you all."*

12. To be involved with God in his mission to reconcile all people to him. In the beginning Adam and Eve sinned and this brought alienation to the world. But God had a plan to bring men and women back to him. This plan started with God calling Abraham to follow him (Genesis 12: 1-3). God promised to bless Abraham and said he would be a blessing to others. When we become Christians we share in this promise and blessing. The Bible says in Galatians 3: 29 in the New Testament, *"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

Then God wants us to continue this blessing and promise by blessing others, especially by sharing the good news of Jesus with them, and also by loving them and serving them.

Jesus speaks of the love we should have in the **great commandment** where he said, *"The most important one," answered Jesus, 'is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these' "* (Mark 12: 29-31).

Jesus then lets us know our mission to share the gospel. We learn this by seeing what he said to his first disciples, *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey*

everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age' ” (Matthew 28: 19-20).