

Life Group Topic #22

IF MY LIFE PURPOSE COULD BE REDUCED TO ONE WORD

John 9:1-12

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

What is the best thing that happened to you this past week?

WORSHIP: (15 minutes)

Use whatever means possible to turn the group's attention to the wonder and majesty of our God- including music, prayer, meditation on the Psalms, and other art forms.

WORD APPLICATION: (45 minutes)

Briefly read or paraphrase the following sermon summary before moving to the heart of this section: the discussion around the application questions.

Read John 9:1-12 together. The disciples see the man's need as an opportunity to explore a philosophical question about pain and suffering.

C.S. Lewis put the challenge into words...*If God were good, he would wish to make his creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty he would be able to do what he wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.*

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN... C.S. Lewis

In one form or another suffering does come from sin. If there had never been sin, there would be no suffering. But if we go on from that and begin to link particular suffering in some person with particular sin, we are wrong. Jews believed...

- This man sinned in some other existence
- Or his parents sinned and this impacted him

Jesus suggested a 3rd hypothesis...*but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*

- Suffering is permitted for wise and good reasons, which we shall one day comprehend
- Our suffering can provide a platform in which the grace and power of God can show themselves

We cannot assume that it is the right of every believer to be healthy, nor can we assume that suffering is the direct result of personal sin. James Montgomery Boice says...*In some cases, suffering is corrective. It is given in order to get us back on the path which God has chosen for us. In other cases, it is constructive. It is given to build character. In still other cases, as here, it is given solely that God might receive glory.*

- Corrective suffering is seen in Hebrews 12:5-7, 11

- Constructive suffering...Psalm 119:67...*before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey your word.* Someone said...never trust a man who doesn't limp...someone who has suffered and been changed through that suffering
- Glory of God suffering is seen in Job where there was no concrete reason given for all the suffering in his life but God had been glorified through it. With Lazarus, John 11:4 says...*this sickness will not end in death. No it is for the God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.* Many people put their faith in Christ because of the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection.

With "glory of God" suffering, there is not always a clear reason why...there wasn't with Job and there wasn't with Daryl and Sue. Daryl was at home and deep in sermon preparation and his young kids were quite loud so Sue took them for a ride in the car. The doorbell rang and the RCMP were there to tell Daryl that Sue and the kids had been killed in a traffic accident. Some predicted that this happened so that there would be a mighty move of God in their town, but it never happened. Daryl picked up the pieces of his life and moved on to serve God, but there was not clear reason given for the suffering.

The clear message of hope from Jesus is that my challenges are not punishment, not from neglect or the mistakes of others but to give an opportunity for the work and glory of God...works of patience and humility and gentleness which His Spirit accomplishes in the midst of suffering.

With this blind man Jesus had to be available to see the works of God done. Jesus saw this as his work, and there was a limited time to do this work.

Jesus was absolutely convinced that He was to do the work God had sent him to do. The text says that there is limited time...*as long as it is day...*a timeless God and yet concerned that the moments are passing...*the field is ripe for harvest.* There is not all the time in the world.

You see, a GOAL is always measurable, accomplishable within a period of time, and will be replaced by a new goal once it is achieved. You can have multiple goals at any given time. But a PURPOSE is not measurable, is never fully attainable in this life, and will only be refined and restated, never replaced, in your lifetime----if it is the right purpose for you. You will only have one purpose active in your life.

---TOTAL LIFE MANAGEMENT---Shank—27

So what would be the life purpose that lurks in the background of this story? In the midst of threats and stress and challenges, Jesus saw a blind man and that blind man's life was changed forever. Each of us shares a component in the unique life purpose Jesus has given each of us. For each of us that component can be stated in one word...OTHERS!

When the Empress of Ireland went down with a hundred and thirty Salvation Army officers on board, May 29, 1914, one hundred and nine officers were drowned, and not one body that was picked up had on a life jacket. The few survivors told how the

Salvationists, finding there were not enough life jackets for everyone, took off their own jackets and strapping them on others said, "I can die better than you can." And from the deck of that sinking boat, they flung their battle-cry around the world—OTHERS!

Each of our life purpose statements must include OTHERS and each our life purpose statements must include our intent that we would become more and more responsive to the Spirit's promptings when He points out the blind men around us.

Word Application Questions:

1. Have there been times in your life when you or people you know have encountered...

- **Corrective or constructive suffering...Hebrews 12:5-7, 11**
- **Glory of God suffering...John 9:3 and John 11:4**

What has that done in you or them?

2. There is a sense in which all men are alike and God gives the same universal purposes to every man. These include four areas...

- **The Great Commission: To Build the Kingdom...Matthew 28:18-20**
- **The Cultural Commission: To Tend the Culture...Genesis 1:28**
- **The Great Commandment: To Love the King...Matthew 22:37**
- **The New Commandment: To Love the King's Children...John 13:34**

Each of us is as unique as our thumbprint or DNA and God's purpose for us is just as unique. So the particular mix of how God wants us to personally fulfill these four universal purposes becomes our life purpose. **How would your life purpose reflect these four areas?**

3. With all the complexities of life this summer, how can we help each other in our Life Group to keep focused on our life purpose? (Keeping the main thing the main thing)

WITNESS (LGLA): (15 minutes)

Continue to prepare for your outreach plans for the month of June. Remember that the relationships you develop with people is far more valuable than the project itself.

Assign someone to write a brief report on what you did and send it to Sylvia Pauls at spauls@southabbotsford.com Include some pictures if that is appropriate for your outreach event.