

The Purpose of Membership

John 4:1 through John 4:8 (NKJV)

¹Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John ²(though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), ³He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴But He needed to go through Samaria.

⁵So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."
⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Series Introduction:

Through the years there have been buzz words and movements in the Christian community that seemed to be an overall theme across denominations. We used them to describe the climate and our understanding of what God desires for us. We worshipped through the season of Jubilee a few years ago as Israel reached it's 50th anniversary.

There was a season when we heard many preachers talking about Destiny in the early 90's. With the rise of the book about the prayer of Jabez we heard many people talk about enlarging our territory. We have even come through the season of preaching on Prosperity that still lingers today.

But now we have entered into the season of purpose. I believe it will last for a long time in the body of Christ because it speaks to an age old idea that has carried us through all of the seasons and generations. Purpose driven ministry answers the question of "*what is God's will for my life*".

When we talk about purpose and God's will today, we are not simply talking about our personal or individual conditions. We want to know God's will for our work situations. We want to know God's will for our families. We want to know God's will for our relationships. We want to know about our healing and our deliverance from oppression or stresses.

We seek God because he answers prayer. We seek him because we know that he orders our steps. We seek him because he has power to save and deliver. We seek him because he is a healer and bread when we are hungry and water when we are thirsty. He's a battle ax in the time of battle and shelter in the time of storm.

We need to know these things and praise him for his goodness. The challenge we face though, is this; do we recognize God is more than that? Do we realize God wants more for us and more from us than our own comforts? Do we even consider that God has another purpose for us that is greater than our personal life conditions?

That is why this season of understanding purpose is so powerful. It addresses the issue of purpose in a holistic way that looks at every phase of the Christian journey. It challenges us to see the will of God on a level of understanding that goes beyond the benefits of salvation alone.

There are five things God wants for all of us. They begin with salvation and then evolve to much more. Each week we will share one of these five purposes God wants for us. As we examine the ministry of Jesus in Samaria, we will identify God's desires for us and better understand his purpose. Today we will begin with the purpose of membership.

Introduction:

Due to some changes in the social and political climate, Jesus has determined it is time for him to leave the region of Judah in the south of Israel and journey to Galilee in the North. To get to Galilee from Judah seems to be an easy task when you look at a map. It seems like you just travel about 60 miles north through the region of Samaria and you're there. But there is more to it than that in our text.

The Bible specifically points out to us in verse 4 that Jesus needed to go through Samaria. It said it as if going through Samaria was not a normal practice. Think about it: there is Judah to the south, Samaria in the middle, and Galilee to the north. It seems that he would obviously pass through Samaria because it's a straight shot. For the bible to point out his travel plans means there is more to this issue than meets the eye.

In 2 Kings 17 we find that many of the men from Israel were taken captive and removed from the land. They were replaced with men from other parts of the Assyrian empire. The foreigners dwelt in the land and intermarried with the Jews who were left behind. They even subscribed to their own version of religion that included the worship of God and the worship of other pagan gods. Eventually in 400 B.C. they constructed their own temple on Mount Gerizim because they believed the mountain was the appointed place to worship God, not Jerusalem.

They intermarried and their blood line was not pure. They couldn't trace their heritage back to Abraham so they were not considered to be Jews any longer. They violated God's word and built their own place of worship while rejecting his temple.

To the Jews these people had at least three strikes against them. In the mind of the Jews, the Samaritans were no longer part of God's chosen people. They were not in the family. They were considered Gentiles. Actually they were considered worse than Gentiles.

The end result is that Samaritans were hated by the Jews. The hatred and disdain for them was so strong that any Good Jew who was traveling from Judah to Galilee would bypass the entire region of Samaria. A good Jew in Jesus day would cross the Jordan River to the east, travel north through Perea and then cross the Jordan again before getting to Galilee.

That's kind of like a person traveling from Montgomery to Huntsville on I-65. They decide that they hate Birmingham and get off 65, go around Jefferson County, then get back on 65 before they get to Huntsville.

Even with this situation, the Bible says Jesus needed to go through Samaria. Why? Why would he risk his reputation by going through Samaria? Why would he risk being called unclean by interacting with these heavily despised people?

It's because one of God's purposes for every person is membership in his family. Our purpose statement is: "God wants me in his family."

Jesus has put his holy and righteous reputation on the line. He has risked being put out of fellowship with the other Jews. Even when his disciples return, they give him a funny look. He has deliberately traveled into Samaria. So here he is. It's a little more than a 20 mile walk from Jerusalem to Sychar and the Bible says Jesus stops at a well during the sixth hour. The sixth hour is between noon and three in the afternoon, in the heat of the day. The disciples are gone into town to buy some food and Jesus is sitting alone at the well waiting for an appointment with a Samaritan woman.

God really wanted this woman in his family. She was far from perfect just like a lot of us. She was a Samaritan so she already had three strikes against her. Add to that the fact that she was a home wrecker who went through five husbands. Add also the fact that she was shacking up with another man when Jesus met her. The Lord, put it all on the line for **this** woman.

1 Timothy 2:1 through 1 Timothy 2:6 (NKJV)

¹Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, ²for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. ³For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴**who desires all men to be saved and to**

come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man* Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,

When you boil our faith down to the most basic concepts, there are no “good people”. The Bible declares that there is none righteous, no not one. The Old Testament said our righteousness was as filthy rags before God. Romans 3:23 says **all** have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We were all worthy of eternal fire in hell. There is not a person in this church or any other church who is better than that Samaritan woman. We were all unclean. We were all enemies of God. We were all standing with strikes against us. Jesus risked his reputation to reach out to all of us.

Titus 3:3 through Titus 3:7 (NKJV)

³For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Paul reveals to Titus how we all have done something. Think about your life before you met Jesus. Think about the sins you committed, the things you had done, the people you had hurt. How embarrassing do you think it was for Jesus to come and invite you into his family?

I won't talk about you, but I will talk about me. When God finally got my attention, I was in college. I could take all day to tell you about my faults at that time, but here is the short list. I was hateful. I was prideful. I was manipulative. I was a thief and a liar. I was a fornicator. I was lustful and I was covetous. Sometimes when I went out to do wrong Jesus was there telling me to turn around and do right.

It was so embarrassing to have Jesus seeking after me in clubs. He put his reputation on the line each time he stopped by the hotel rooms where I was doing my dirt. It was shameful the way he tried to speak to me while I was steadily cussing people out. And yet, Jesus still made appointment after appointment and put his reputation on the line to bring me into his family. The night he saved me, I was on my way to find some trouble. I just stopped by the church to kill some time before the party started.

I'm not ashamed. I'm grateful. God made me a son even when I wasn't fit to live. I'm grateful that God went out of his way to meet me at a point in my life when I needed

him most. Am I worried about you spreading this in the streets? No. Some of you have done worse. If we followed you around we would see the embarrassing places you force to Jesus to meet you too. If it wasn't for his blood covering us, we would still be filthy today. If it wasn't for the washing and regeneration of the Holy Spirit we would all perish.

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)

⁹The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish** but that all should come to repentance.

God doesn't want anyone to perish. Every person in this world is important to God.

John 3:16 through John 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

God's Son died for us and all of our baggage. He died for our brokenness. He died for us even though he already knew how messed up we were. He didn't just die for people who seemed to have it all together. It doesn't matter what you've done. God wants you in his family. God won't reject you. God won't turn his nose up at you.

I want to stop right now and apologize to you for all of the church goers who mistreated you. I want to apologize for all of the people who had a holier than thou attitude. I want to apologize for all the preachers who were not faithful to serve God or his people. I want to apologize for all the times people judged you in the church without ever getting to know you. I want to apologize for all of the Sundays you came to church and nobody bothered to learn your name.

God isn't like that. He knows your name. He knows your story. He knows where to find you. He cares about your life. He loves you. He wants you in his family. I've heard people say they didn't know why they were still alive or they didn't know why God is keeping them around. It's because God has a purpose for their lives. That purpose begins with becoming a part of his family.

"My life has purpose, because God wants me in his family". I'm wanted because God wants me in his family. I'm special because God wants me in his family. I'm loved because God wants me in his family. My life has meaning because God wants me in his family.

The Plan

What is God's will for your life? He wants you to begin by becoming part of his family. He wants you to accept his gift of love and know that no matter what you've done he still desires to call you his own. Here is what you do to fulfill that purpose in your life:

1. Realize where you are. You may be in Samaria and don't realize it. God knows where you are, but in order for you to become complete in Jesus, you need to know. You need to know that sin separates you from God. It makes us far from him in the spirit. You may be doing well in the eyes of men, but in the eyes of God, you are as far away as Samaria.
2. Know your true worth. God loved you so much that he allowed his Son to die like a criminal to pay the penalty for your sins. Every time you have come to church and every time you have heard the good news about Jesus, God was trying to reach you. God is looking for you and is making every effort to meet with you to invite you into his family.
3. Accept what God has to offer. God wants you in his family. He wants you to hear the good news and believe his story. He says if we would confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we would be saved. He wants you to confess him as head of your life like he is the head of the family. He wants you to experience the fullness of joy that comes with salvation. He wants your life to be enriched with the fellowship that comes from being a part of a local church body.

Conclusion:

Bruce Goodrich was being initiated into the cadet corps at Texas A & M University prior to the beginning of his freshman year. One night, Bruce was forced to run until he dropped -- but he never got up. Bruce Goodrich died before he even entered college.

A short time after the tragedy, Bruce's father wrote this letter to the administration, faculty, student body, and the corps of cadets:

"I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my family for the great outpouring of concern and sympathy from Texas A & M University and the college community over the loss of our son Bruce. We were deeply touched by the tribute paid to him in the battalion. We were particularly pleased to note that his Christian witness did not go unnoticed during his brief time on campus."

Mr. Goodrich went on to say:

"I hope it will be some comfort to know that we harbor no ill will in the matter. We know our God makes no mistakes. Bruce had an appointment with his Lord and is now secure in his celestial home. When the question is asked, 'Why did this happen?' perhaps one answer will be, 'So that many will consider where they will spend eternity.'"

Somewhere along life's road, Bruce Goodrich had an appointment with Jesus. No matter what his circumstances were or how his life ended, he had found purpose because he had found Christ. Even in his death, his purpose came full circle as it caused others to consider their place in eternity. God wants everyone to be in his family, even the young men who forced Bruce Goodrich to run until he died.

It's June 7, 2009 at 12:39 pm. This is your appointment. God wants you in his family. What will you do?