

## **Made for God**

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**STORY:** When I was in my 20s, I had many problems with my college studies. I sensed a calling to ministry. But I had an undiagnosed learning disability (which is why this text is 16 font and space and a half...so I can read it)! My bragging point was that “I flunked out of all the best colleges.” And though, that is a comical statement, humor was my way of distracting myself from my pain and disappointment.

I could not seem to get where I thought God was calling me, so, I set aside a vocational ministry calling and poured myself into business. I outworked my peers moving up the ladder.

When I began my work in food service contracting, I treated it like a ministry. I told others I was a food service evangelist and I went to work with that mindset. Consequently, God used me to win people to faith in Christ and encourage believers in the faith. I had the opportunity to speak to people in my management role that a pastor may never have. I believe God has called every single believer to minister... wherever God's has intentionally placed us.

But somewhere along the way I had lost sight of my mission and calling. There is good money in contracting

services with universities and large businesses. And I began to replace the dream of food service evangelism with the dream of the fast car, the coolest toys and all the trappings of success. The American Dream became my **first** dream. God's mission was relegated to an afterthought. God was there when I really needed something. But that was about it. I began to live for myself.

After a few years of living for myself it occurred to me; my soul was dying of thirst. I had money, a new car, no debt and was blowing hundreds of dollars per week on my whims and desires. But none of those distractions brought me lasting joy. Life felt futile. Where is all of this going? There was a deep longing that toys could not fill, cars could not fill, a house could not fill, expensive vacations and day trips could not fill. These were temporary distractions. But when the 'new' wore off, I was in the same condition; empty and longing for someone or something to fill the void in my soul.

My soul was thirsty for God's Spirit but I was filling my soul with everything except God's word and His presence. It was as though my soul needed a good omelet but I was chewing on plastic.

How did I end up in this place? I began my Christian walk with a sense of mission and the joy of walking with God, but now my soul was starving and I felt terrible!

I got to this place spiritual starvation and parching spiritual thirst by living for myself. I was the center of my life. And apparently, living for oneself does not meet our deepest need for meaning, hope and joy. Apparently, I am not here to live for me! That does not work!

The word of God tells us that we were not created for ourselves. Living for our own whims and pleasures and desires is what our fallen nature desires. But we were not created to live for ourselves. And that is why following our natural desires leads to emptiness and futility.

## **WE WERE MADE FOR GOD**

**1 Samuel 12:22 “For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself.”**

There are a few things worth highlighting in this passage. First is the word:

### **NAME**

Piper says: *The name of God often refers to his reputation, his fame, his renown. This is the way we use the word “name” when we say someone is making a name for himself.*

Samuel is stating that God is making a name for himself. And the primary thing God uses to make a name for Himself is us, God's people. Would it surprise you to hear that the primary reason you were born is to make a name for God?

God's desire to make a name for Himself is confirmed in many other passages.

*For example, (Piper states:) God describes Israel as a waistcloth, or belt, with which God chose to highlight his glory, even though there were times when Israel was temporarily unfit.*

***Jeremiah 13:11“For as the loincloth clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory, but they would not listen.”***

Why was Israel chosen as a garment of God, to cling to Him and magnify God's glory? That it might be a “name, a praise, and a glory.” (for God)

God chose Israel so that the people would make a reputation for him. God says in Isaiah that Israel is;

***Isaiah 43:21“the people whom I formed **for myself** that they **might declare my praise.**”***

And when the church came to see itself in the New Testament as the true Israel, Peter described God's purpose for us like this:

**1 Peter 2:9 "You are a chosen race . . .(WHY?) *that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*"**

In other words, Israel and the church are chosen by God to make a name for God in the world. This is why we pray first and foremost,

**Matthew 6:9 "Hallowed be *your name.*"**

This is why we pray,

**Psalm 23:3 "Lead us in paths of righteousness *for your name's sake*"**

## GOD CENTERED PEOPLE

On this side of the cross, that means being a Christ-dependent, Christ-exalting people.

**1 John 2:12 "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven *for his name's sake*"**

**Colossians 3:17 "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God the Father through him."**

So, the purpose of our lives is not to do what is right for us. The purpose of life is not to find what makes us happy. The purpose of life is not to be a basically good person. The purpose of life is not to accumulate some things, go on lots of vacations, get a summer home and live the American dream. That is not the first reason God has put us here.

The purpose of our lives as followers of Jesus Christ (who claim to have laid down our lives to follow Him), is to make a name for God. We are here to spread the fame of our great God among the nations and among the people that we influence; at work, at home, on vacation, in our hobbies.

We have a purpose and it is a God sized purpose. We are ambassadors for God who have been sent into this world to make a good reputation for Jesus Christ. To make a “name” for our Great God. And our last passage revealed to us that the bigger purpose behind the forgiveness of our sins is to glorify the name of Jesus Christ, the one to whom we owe everything.

**1 SAM 12:22b It pleased the Lord to make you a people for Himself**

A PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF

The second half of our Samuel passage states that it was pleasing to the Lord to ***make a people for Himself***. This “people”, whom He made for Himself, were the same ones

whose mission was to make a name for God. These people, the nation of Israel, were called to be set apart to make a name for God among the nations.

It made a name for God when the Lord's people walked around the walls of Jericho and shouted...and God reduced the walls to rubble. They walked in God's power highlighting God's name. God was glorified and the people were blessed and fulfilled. They were satisfied in His purposes.

#### THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO MAKE A NAME

In our time, God calls us not just as individuals, but as a whole church, to be a people of God, called out of the world and called together into this fellowship....a gathering of God's people; to make a name for our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. How does God want to work through this whole body of gathered saints to make a name for Himself?

Is it church planting? Is it some sort of mission to this region or city to which God is calling us? Is it a great wave or mercy ministry to the poor in this community? Is it intentionally viewing the work each of us do as a ministry because we treat our work as worship?

God has gathered us to make a name for Himself. I don't know what that looks like. But God does. And He will tell us what He has in mind; as we surrender our self-directed, self-

glorifying lives and embrace our God-given mission. We are here as instruments of God to make a name for Him. There can be no higher calling. Rich and poor, strong and weak all share the same calling. We are here to make a name for God.

## DISTRACTIONS FROM GOD'S MISSION

The bible makes our purpose clear. We are here to make a name for our Great God. We are to do this as individuals and as a whole church as we walk in His counsel, His strength and joy.

But why do so many live for themselves only thinking about God when things are difficult? Why do churches not frame everything they do through the lenses of existing as a people for His name? Instead with live for our personal convictions and treat the church like it belongs to us instead of God. Why?

Here are a few of the things that draw God's people away from our mission to make a name for God.

**Worldly Philosophy** (The American dream or flesh driven living)

We are bombarded with worldly philosophies that tell us to think of ourselves above all else. When I was in a master's program in counseling, I asked the instructor to confirm my understanding of the program's world view.

I raised my hand and asked the professor: “so, are you telling me that counselors are trained to tell people to do what is right for them; while I, as a believer, would tell people to line up their conduct with God’s will, expressed in God’s word?” She confirmed; “that was correct.”

This world is telling us to do what is right for us. But God’s word tells us we are not here to do what is right for us. We are here to do what is right for God, and His reputation, and name. Only then will we be satisfied because God will draw near to those who live for His glory.

*Shoot for your dreams:* The world tells; “don’t let anything interfere with our dreams. Don’t let anyone tell you that you can not do it! But is that a Christian way of thinking! What if Joe has the physical make up and mental toughness to play professional football, but God tells Joe to make a great name for God by laying down his life in Liberia in medical missions? What if Jennifer has the musical talent to go on the road in a rock band and become famous...making a name for herself, but instead she follows God’s calling to be an excellent mother to her children? The world would call her a failure but God will fill her work with joy and fulfillment.

Do you see the way that we must confront worldly philosophies just to discern God's calling and live in joyful satisfaction?

Often times God will use the talent He has given us and call us to use that talent and passion for His glory rather than our own. But sometimes it does not line up that way. Living up to our potential is not God's first concern for us. And it is not best for our soul.

We come up with our own dream instead of asking God what dream He has for our life. And we expect God to bless us, when we never showed concern for why He put us here.

*Do what is right for you:* So, the world tells us to "do what is right for you." And it tells us to "strive for our dreams." While God tells us to come and die to ourselves and live for Jesus Christ. Only those who die to themselves and live for the glory of Christ will experience the full power and joy of God's blessings and presence. Only those who die to themselves can be confident they are saved. They have come to faith in Christ on God's terms.

## OTHER FACTORS

There are other things in our world (both temptations and philosophies) that take our eyes off our mission.

*Biblical Illiteracy and Prayerlessness:*

Another way in which we are drawn away from God's mission to make a name for God... is the biblical illiteracy of God's people. Why do people get distracted by the prosperity gospel? Why do God's people think it is okay to smoke pot and get stoned? Why do God's people think it is no problem to date a non-Christian? Why do many of God's people think there is little difference between Islam, Judaism and Christianity? And why can only a handful of people in most churches articulate a simple presentation of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ?

It is because God's people have no interest in God's word, or in spending time focusing on God through prayer. We have so many other preoccupations, such as Netflix, video games, sports and other things that give us a good excuse to not even read a chapter of the bible a week, or a month. And many spend little or no time conversing with God's life-giving presence. And that is because we love the world and we love our life style more than we love Jesus Christ.

The truth is this; God's people are starving themselves into a spiritually anemic, feeble, facile faith that convinces no one, because there is no conviction and strength of soul. Our faith does nothing for us because we look spiritually to others like our soul is in a concentration camp...all skin and bones.

And if you are not feeding your soul and thereby starving yourself, come to the fountain of living water today. God will give you living water that will refresh you and revive you. Come and change the purpose of your life today. Come and live for Jesus Christ and His name instead of yourself. And then you will have joy and satisfaction to the glory of Jesus Christ.

### *A War on Silence*

Lastly, we find God in moments of silence as we become preoccupied with God. He comes into focus as we tune out the world. However, the world is at war with silence and focus.

### **Psalm 46:10**

***Be still,***

***and know that I am God.***

***I will be exalted among the nations,***

***I will be exalted in the earth!***

***Vs 11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.***

How do we get in touch with the truth that God will be exalted among the nations and exalted in the earth? We are reminded of God's glory and God great mission when we are still.

### QUICK APPLICATION

**1 Corinthians 10:31 “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”**

If you are a parent

If you are in the workforce

If you are a student or young person

If you have a significant skill and growing fame

## **SUMMARY**

So, let’s summarize. God has called us in this world as individuals and as a whole church to make Him famous. We are called to make a great name for God.

God will give us specific ways that He is calling us to reach our world with the gospel and make a name for Him.

The world is throwing many distractions our way. The worldly philosophies are mixed into just about every tv show and movie we watch. The worldly philosophies are mixed into every class your children will take in school. And we need to teach them how to identify the ways the world is preaching to them. More importantly we need to model the joy producing life that comes from living to make a name for God.

The flesh draws us away from our call to make a name for our Great God.

### **TAKING IT HOME**

1. God is calling you to come be with Him and fill your soul in His presence? How will you respond to that call?
2. Are you getting real about your flesh patterns? God's people will not shame you; they will help you and pray for you.
3. What are you doing to intentionally grow in God's word?
4. Will you yield your right to make a name for yourself, and instead, use your life to make a name for God?