

Plans, Pleasures and Purpose in Christ

Ephesians 1:9-10

Ephesians 1:7-10 (CSB)

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding.

9 He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.

As we've examined the first 6 verses of Eph 1, we've uncovered:

- An incredible description of God as our loving father.
- An incredible revelation of our identity as God's well-loved children—His Kingdom Kids.

The Apostle Paul has explained that God has CHOSEN us.

We are CHOSEN by God in Christ:

- God's choice of us was **unmerited**—we did not earn it or deserve to be chosen.
- God chose **hopeless people**—we had no basis for hope in ourselves or our situation.
- God chose us for **adoption as sons and daughters**—we are now a part of His immediate family.

God has chosen to fully love us, fully accept us, fully approve of us and fully bless us.

Last week: God FREES, FORGIVES and FULLY FORMS those whom He has chosen to adopt.

In Christ I am:

- **FREE**—From slavery to sin & brokenness. No sin or habit or addiction has ultimate power.
- **FORGIVEN**—God has forgiven my rebellious heart & actions and chooses to forget about my sin.
Now I have no reason to feel shame, discouragement or disappointment.
- **FULLY FORMED**—God does this with wisdom and understanding—I am new in Christ!

Christian, this is who you are!

Last week we asked ourselves, “WHO ARE YOU?”

- In our passage today, Paul continues to reveal the incredible scope of WHO WE ARE.

Who AM I?—it's an important question...

- Who you think you are affects how you think about yourself.
- And who you think you are affects how you think & act toward others.
- Who you think you are affects how you think and act toward God.

So, who and What you think you are is a BIG DEAL.

- We all live from a place of our identity.
- We live out of a place of how we see and understand ourself.

Our self-identity is not only important, it is also COMPLEX.

- We all self-identify as a lot of things and in many different ways...
- There are a lot of things that are true about us.

We form our identities around several different aspects of life:

- **What We DO** —We self-identify a having meaning and purpose based on what we do.
 - Parent, Grandparent, Student, Doctor, Businessman, Teacher, Retired
- **What We Desire** —We identify according to what we think about and prefer.
 - Republican, Democrat, Gay, Alcoholic
- **What We Achieve** —We self-identify according to what we can achieve or possess.
 - Successful, failure, organized, creative—“upper -class, middle-class”, etc...

All these things may be true, but they are lesser ways of answering the question, “Who am I?”

- So we've been studying verse-by-verse to discover what is MOST TRUE about us.
 - as we've studied Ephesians 1, we start to learn a better way to ask the question, "Who am I?"
- The better question is, "In light of what Jesus has done for me, who does God say that I am?"

Instead of, "Who am I?", a better question is, "Who does God say I am?"

- This is how we will discover what is MOST true about us.

—Why ask "Who does God say I am?"—

Because we were created BY GOD, created FOR GOD and we are dependent ON GOD.

Colossians 1:16-17 (NLT)

...through Christ, God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth.

He made the things we can see and the things we can't see (...)

Everything was created through him and for him.

He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

We only exist because of God's work through His son Jesus.

- So we must look to God's work through Jesus to know who we were created to be.
- We must look to God's work through Jesus to understand who we are!

Our problem is we don't naturally do this.

- We tend to look at ourselves and what WE HAVE DONE or what WE CAN DO to form identity.
—OR...—
- We might look to others do or what others expect or what others want from me to form identity.

BUT, for us to truly answer the question, "Who am I", we shouldn't look at ourselves or to others...

To answer the question, "Who am I," we must stop looking at ourselves and at others and start looking to God.

- We must form our identities on what GOD has done—not on what we have done.
- We need to think about ourselves in terms of what God can do—not what we can do!
- We must stop forming our identities around what others think and start to form our identity on what our FATHER thinks!
- We must stop worrying about what others desire FROM us and start dwelling on what God has done FOR us.

When we ask God, "Who am I," we discover God loves us, chooses us, redeems us, forgives us, adopts us, and fully blesses us in Christ—we discover that we are God's Kingdom Kids.

The challenge of our lives in Christ is to live FROM this place of identity as God's child.

- It is a process to start living from a place of being FULLY LOVED.
- It is a process to start to live from a place of APPROVAL—no need to prove yourself.
- It is a process to start to live from a place of FULL ACCEPTANCE.
- It is a process to start to live from a place of FULL GRACE—never earning the love or approval.

This is the process of living the Christian life—to BE who God has made you to BE.

- NOT to be the "best version of myself"
- NOT to be the best you can be.
- NOT to be the best ANYTHING!!

****Paul HAD IT ALL and DID IT ALL—really well!!! And he said that his best efforts were GARBAGE compared to his true identity as God's child in Christ!**

God created you to BE HIS CHILD—apart from this, nothing you do in life will ever matter.

- Remember, the foundation of identity is: we were made BY God, FOR God to live WITH God.
- All other identities are nothing if this foundation is not in place.

In light of this, every one of us needs to hear this:

What is MOST TRUE about you is that you are LOVED by God.

- **You are the BELOVED of God.**
- **Your identity is BELOVED.**

So Paul has really given us a SOUND answer to life's BIG QUESTION, "Who am I?"

- **WHO AM I has been settled for us in Christ.**

NOW, Paul turns his attention to:

- **Life's SECOND big question: "Why am I here?"**

We all ask, "Why am I here?"!

- We all want to know what the meaning of life is—the purpose of life.
- We all want to know what we are supposed to do.
- We all want to know that we are accomplishing what we are supposed to accomplish.
- We all want to know how we should contribute.

Our challenge is that we view ourselves as the most important factor when asking the questions, "Why am I here?"

- I want to feel fulfilled...
- I want to feel purposeful...
- I want to feel accepted

Paul addresses this in our text today:

Ephesians 1:9-10 (CSB)

He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.

As God's creation, we are not only dependent on Him, we are subordinate to Him as well.

- God did not create us to be superior to Him—that would be absurd!
- God's creation will always be subordinate to God.
- Elevating ourselves, others or any human creation above God is idolatry.

Paul says, "God's plans are GREAT, and they benefit us tremendously, but it's not all about us!"

- YES, God has DONE wonderful things FOR us...
- YES, God HAS wonderful things in store FOR us...
- YES, God desires wonderful things FOR us...

Even though God has completed and has and purposed and planned AMAZING things for us...

- His plans, His pleasure, and His purpose is not primarily about us.
- **Paul says it is a plan regarding Jesus.**
- **It is a plan to fulfill His own good pleasure.**
 - Remember Col 1:16—all things were created by Him and FOR Him...
 - We exist for God's pleasure and for God's glory—NOT for our own.

God's plans, God's pleasure, and God's purposes do not revolve around us, but around Jesus.

I realize I am drawing this out, but this is the WHAT IS MISSING!!

Sometimes we forget that God's plans are about GOD and GOD'S PLEASURE and are NOT primarily about us.

- Our failure to live from our identity in Christ leads us to live for OUR pleasure and for OUR glory.
 - **This will never work out for us!**
 - We were made for GOD'S plans, God's pleasure, and God's purposes.
 - We were NOT made for our own plans, pleasures and purposes!
 - We were not made for ourselves...

We were created FOR God and only experience fulfillment when we live life WITH God.

- We are DEPENDENT upon God for our identity!
- We are DEPENDENT on God for our fulfillment.
- We are DEPENDENT on God for our joy.

This is why we are scouring this passage...verse-by-verse...

We want to SETTLE our identity issues once and for all!!

We want to STOP forming our self-understanding according to:

- What we do well or where we are bad.
- What we have or what we lack.
- What we want or don't want.

We want to function from a self-understanding as Kingdom Kids!

- Focusing on what God has done for us.
- Longing for more of what God has for us.
- Desiring what God desires for us.

This causes us to live for God's glory and not ours.

I'm don't trying to live for my glory any more—I'm DONE with that.

I'm old enough to know that:

The only true thing about me apart from what God has done for me in Christ is that I am broken, selfish, rebellious, desperate and selfish...

- Who wants to join me as I pursue MY glory?
- Who is going to benefit from this pursuit?
- Where will this pursuit of glory lead me and my family?
 - despair, longing, fear, striving, jealousy, criticism, divisiveness...
 - AWAY FROM GOD!
 - Away from love and approval and acceptance and affirmation and peace and joy

My life now has EVERYTHING TO DO with who God is and what God wants.

- I want to find my place in God's, "plan to fulfill His own good pleasure"

There is nothing good in me apart from God.

- There is nothing good about my plans apart from God's plans.
- There is nothing good about my pleasures apart from God's pleasures.
- There is nothing good about my purposes apart from God's purposes!

God has been teaching His chosen people this since the BEGINNING.

- This identity struggle is an ANCIENT struggle!!

Deuteronomy 9:4-6 (NLT)

“After the Lord your God has done this for you, don’t say in your hearts, ‘The Lord has given us this land because we are such good people!’ No, it is because of the wickedness of the other nations that he is pushing them out of your way. 5 It is not because you are so good or have such integrity that you are about to occupy their land. The Lord your God will drive these nations out ahead of you only because of their wickedness, and to fulfill the oath he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 6 You must recognize that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land because you are good, for you are not—you are a stubborn people.

Only God’s plan is good—we are not good, and neither are our plans.

- Our joy and purpose and blessings are all found IN CHRIST!

God’s plan in Christ is for HIS GLORY—and is also for our good:

- We were unlovable and selfish, but in Christ we are LOVED.
- We were lost, but in Christ we are ADOPTED AS GOD’S CHILDREN.
- We were slaves to sin, but in Christ we are REDEEMED
- We were evil and rebellious, but in Christ we are HOLY
- We were guilty before God, but in Christ we are FORGIVEN
- We were undeserving and hopeless, but in Christ we are GRACED
- We were rejected and condemned, but in Christ we are CHOSEN

God’s plan was to do all of this for us in Christ for HIS glory and for HIS pleasure.

Christian, you were created for God’s glory and for God’s pleasure—that is who you are!

- This is why you were created!
- This is how you are adequately sustained!

WHY AM I HERE??

I am here, “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” — The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 1

- I exist to live out of this identity of BELOVED CHILD OF GOD.
- I exist to please God!

When we live FIRST AND FOREMOST from this identity, we will process our decisions and actions through the filter of, “does this bring glory to God?”.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (CSB)

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

Ephesians 4:30 (NLT)

And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own...

Matthew 5:16 (CSB)

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Our identity—the way we think and feel about ourselves—directly affects HOW we live.

As God’s own children—as Kingdom Kids—we live:

- **Dependent on God**
- **Desiring God’s pleasure**
- **Determined to bring God glory.**

Living lives dependent on God, desiring God’s pleasure, and determined to bring God glory is not a performance issue.

- A life pleasing to God is not just about choosing the right behavior.
- A life pleasing to God is not simply about following the rules.
- A life pleasing to God is not merely resisting bad things...

NO! We exist to glorify God and ENJOY Him forever!

This does NOT mean that you have to give up everything you enjoy in life.

- God isn't trying to force you to live a joyless life by forfeiting all the things you enjoy.
- God's purpose, plan and pleasure is to glorify Himself by satisfying your deepest longings and desires.
- God wants to SETTLE your identity issues by making you brand new in Christ.

Our identity in Christ allows us to MORE FULLY enjoy life's pleasures because we no longer pursue these pleasures seeking fulfillment from them, but rather, we seek them for the glory of God. As Kingdom Kids, we can enjoy things more and need them less.

Our main focus is no longer on what we "do" or what we "want"...

We are now able to live with confidence in what we ALREADY HAVE in Christ.

- This brings us joy, hope, confidence...we are "settled" in Christ!

James 1:17 (CSB)

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens.

1 Timothy 6:17 (CSB)

Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

God WANTS US to enjoy His gifts!

God is awesome and He gives us awesome gifts—for us to enjoy!

- God has chosen us to be holy AND He wants us to be happy!
- God has chosen us to be sanctified AND He wants us to be satisfied!

God's PLANS, His PLEASURES, and His PURPOSES all reveal Him to be a generous giver!

- Yes, God has given gifts for us to enjoy now—MANY of them!

What is more incredible is that God has given us HIMSELF that we might enjoy HIM NOW.

- As His children, we now find delight in the GIVER
- We enjoy Him AND enjoy His gifts!

Grandmas are givers—specifically, they give FOOD.

- How do you best love grandma? EAT! Say THANK YOU
- Acknowledge and praise her for her thoughtful hard work!

How do we best love God? RECEIVE HIS GIFTS and PRAISE HIM!

Christian, we were created FOR GOD.

- This means that your life is joyless apart from God.
- This means that your blessings are fruitless apart from God.
- This means that your relationships are WORK and BURDENSOME apart from God.

Our hearts are unsettled and joyless apart from God.

The converse is true as well—God finds joy in YOU as well!

- **Afterall, God saved you “For His good pleasure”!**
- **God enjoys you, in Christ!**
- **It pleases God and brings Him pleasure for you to enjoy Jesus!**

And so we live life ENJOYING JESUS!

How?

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 (CSB)

There is nothing better for a person than to eat, drink, and enjoy his work. I have seen that even this is from God’s hand, 25 because who can eat and who can enjoy life apart from him?

God spoke all creation into existence through Christ, so it really is all bout Jesus.

- Yes, we have been talking about “identity” and “who you think you are”...

As we discover and form our identity in Christ, we focus EVERYTHING in our life on Jesus.

- **Jesus reveals God’s plans for us**
- **Jesus invites us into the Father’s pleasures**
- **Jesus enables us to engage in the Father’s pursuits**

EVERYTHING about God is revealed to us through Jesus’ loving work:

- **Freeing us from slavery to sin**
- **Forgiving us completely**
- **Fully Forming us as Kingdom Kids.**

In other words:

- **Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s purposes, and so we find our purposes in Him.**
- **Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s pleasures, and so we find our pleasure in Him.**
- **Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s plans, and so we find our plans in Him.**

It REALLY IS all about Jesus!

God has revealed the great MYSTERY to us in Christ!

- God created everything **through** Jesus, but humanity rebelled against God’s perfect plan for us.
- God also created everything **FOR** Jesus, and Jesus will correct every wrong in creation.
- God will, one day, bring everything in heaven and on earth under His authority.

Because God has revealed His plans, pleasure and purpose to us, we know what’s coming.

- And so we live life NOW and are not overwhelmed by the present state of the world.

Because we know and enjoy God, we also TRUST God.

- Because we trust God we are people with TRUE HOPE in God’s plans for the future.

Our identities are IN CHRIST, so we now live according to God’s plans, pleasures & Purposes.

In Christ, we live to bring everything in life under the authority of Christ.

- **We bring our marriage under the authority of Christ**
- **We bring our recreation under the authority of Christ.**
- **We bring our business and finances under the authority of Christ.**
- **We bring our sexuality under the authority of Christ.**
- **We bring our drinking under the authority of Christ.**

We do this in our hearts and lives and families FIRST....then we bring this into the world.

- We don’t waste our life trying to improve ourselves by working harder in our own strength...
- We don’t pacify our true needs by pursuing temporary pleasure...

- We don't sideline ourselves by arguing over issues within the church...
- We don't betray Christ's image in us by criticizing other people or churches or governments...
- We don't waste our life debating politics or theology or pondering things that keep us indoors...

We ENJOY JESUS and they we FOLLOW JESUS!

Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)

"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Who are you?

Why do you exist?

Knowing who we are explains why we exist and defines what we do with our lives.

Knowing who we are in Christ means:

- **We know God's PLANS, and we discover plans for our life as we enjoy Jesus.**
- **We know God's PLEASURES, and we find true pleasure as we enjoy Jesus.**
- **We know God's PURPOSES, and we find our true purpose as we enjoy Jesus.**

Come know and enjoy Jesus!

- Maybe you have been searching for meaning and purpose in what you do...
- Maybe you have been trying to find yourself in what you have...
- Maybe you have been trying to satisfy your longings with what you desire for yourself in life...
- **Your true identity is hidden in Christ—DISCOVER IT TODAY**
- **Your true Plans, Pleasures and Purposes are hidden in Christ—PURSUE THEM NOW**