

In the beginning of this new series, “Following Jesus: Find Your Next Step,” we learned that a disciple is not a fan but someone who follows Jesus as Master.

Discipleship is about BEING with Jesus to LEARN from Jesus how to BECOME like Jesus. Cornerstone has developed a 5-part framework called the Discipleship Pathway that shapes our entire approach to ministry.

On the final Sunday of the series, we’re going to launch a custom online discipleship assessment tool designed to help you discern your current target growth area on the Discipleship Pathway, as well as a specific next step you can take to grow in that area. Here’s a video to tell you more.

We’d covered two of the five parts of the Discipleship Pathway:

Pastor Jeremy taught about **ESTABLISH Identity in Jesus**: These are spaces for Jesus to shape our sense of who we are in Him.

Last Sunday Pastor Steve spoke about **EMBODY the Jesus Way of Life**: These are spaces for learning how to put the commands of Jesus into practice in daily life.

This morning we will look at **Explore Jesus’ Call to Life Mission**: These are spaces for discovering Jesus’ unique callings on our lives.

Let’s do a quick breath prayer before we jump into today’s topic: “Father in Heaven, enfold us in your warm embrace. Lord Jesus, speak to us. Holy Spirit, help us to listen and obey.”

I turned 62 this year, according to ancient Greek tradition, now my tongue and my mind are at their best, though this probably will be questioned by some; according to Hebrew tradition in the Talmud, I am in the right stage to give counsel, though this I am not so certain.

I don’t know how much longer I would live on this side of eternity, but as Abraham Lincoln once said,

“And in the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.”

I definitely want to be alive – to live a vibrant, purposeful and meaningful life, to live life to the full! Don’t you?

Response moment: Say “Yes” to live life to the full.

And do you know when we feel most alive? It’s when we know we are doing what we are made to do, to be the person we are meant to become, to fulfill the goals we’d set out to accomplish.

Frederick Buechner says,

“The place where God calls you is where your deep gladness meets the world's deep hunger.”

And that's God's intention since eternity past and remains in eternity future. He created us to have that deep gladness when we respond to His calling and partner with Him to shine light in the midst of darkness, to live life in the midst of death, and to extend Jesus' love in our own unique life mission.

Listen to what the Bible says in Eph. 2:10 (NIV),

“For we are ***God's handiwork***, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

God's “handiwork” – ποιημα [ποίημα] – is a word that can refer to

a poem written by a poet,

a work of art by an artist,

a fiction/story written by a storyteller.

One bible translation uses the phrase “**God's masterpiece.**”

The message is simple but loud and clear: we are His special creation and each individual Christ-follower has a distinctive role in God's family (cf. Eph. 4:11-16; Rom. 12:3ff.; 1 Cor. 12, 14.)

Here the word “handiwork” underscores the point that God doesn't create us with a cookie cutter nor does He make generic art – we are not mass produced and put together in an assembly line.

In fact, we are expressions of

God's originality,

thoughtful invention,

creative power,

moral attributes,

and awe-inspiring glory.

Like a masterpiece of poem or story, our life has purpose, structure, plotline, and context – filled with God-infused value and significance, manifesting a message He wants to convey in and through our day-to-day living. We are not an insignificant nobody or a no name product – everyone is precious, special and matters to God.

Every person is God-shaped,

a fearfully and wonderfully made masterpiece.

Response moment: “Yes, I am God's masterpiece!”

So the belief that we are just results of a cosmic evolutionary by-product takes away the dignity of every individual made in the image of God.

Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher/theologian, writes:

“Every person born into this world represents something new, something that never existed before, something

original and unique. . . . Every man's foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never-recurring potentialities, and not the repetition of something that another ... has already achieved."¹

This is, again, exactly what Paul says here:

“For we are God's handiwork, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works**, which God **prepared in advance** for us to do.”

It is instructive to note that the only other time Paul uses this word, “handiwork,” is found in Rom. 1:20 where he highlights God's majestic power in creation and the folly of human idolatry: instead of submitting to the Creator's authority, humans create God in their own image and worship self-made idols.

“Created in Christ Jesus to do good works” – it is an exact counterpoint to what Paul is say about human idolatry or folly; and it is, without any doubt, a clear echo of the creation story – it defines precisely

God's purpose, goal,
the redeeming effect of Jesus' work,
and the transforming power of the Holy spirit

in the re-creation of every individual, New creation! [I.e., the renewed image of God.]

It's the Creator's intention all along – ***prepared in advance*** – that every human as an image bearer is called and given a role to co-reign with God, reflecting His glory and extending His kingly rule on earth as it is in heaven!

We are created with purpose and for greatness.

Everyone – and I mean, EVERYONE – has a high calling!

Response Moment: I say “Yes” to my high calling.

The broad strokes of Scriptures tell the story of how the sovereign God of history works behind the scene to restore humankind and the world from a tragedy of our own making.

In the 1 st coming of Jesus, God started the decisive world restoring process to end all evil and everything that's anti-god; Jesus wore multiple hats in the three years when He was traveling around in Palestine:

an itinerant evangelist,
a teacher/Rabbi,
a trainer-coach,

¹ <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/44307?lang=bi>

a sage,
a provocateur,
a prophet,
a healer,
a miracle worker,
an exorcist,
and a friend of sinners.

Jesus might be doing different things in various settings, He knew His life calling: His food was to do the will of the Father who sent Him and to finish His work.

And He was crystal clear about His mission: the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.²

While it is true that every spiritually renewed disciple is being shaped along the same lines as the life of Jesus, and that there is a common call to follow Jesus and grow on the path of discipleship, each Christ-follower must discover one's unique Jesus-call to life mission. We are not called to copy Jesus, to be a carpenter, to preach in temples, and to be nailed on the same cross - there's only one Jesus who is fully God and perfect human.

Everyone is born an original but called by Jesus to pursue a distinct life mission which God has prepared in advance. As Will Mancini correctly says,

“Jesus-followers are not Jesus-photocopies.”³

If you remember the popular acronym **WWJD** and what it stands for, type in the Chat your answer. [“What would Jesus do?”]

Dallas Willard suggests that we need to get a bit more specific and modify it to **HWJL**,

“How would Jesus live if he were you?”

How would Jesus live if he:

works at your job?

sits next to your classmates?

drives your car?

married your spouse?

puts on your pair of pants in the morning?

invests your money?

disciplines your kids?

² Cf. Jn. 4:34 ; Lk. 19:10.

³ Mancini, Will. Younique . Location 788. Kindle Edition.

spends time at your hobby?⁴

Jesus calls us to pursue our individual life mission; whatever station or season of life, whatever career or job, whether young or older, single or married, whatever level of education, socio-economic status or cultural heritage, that mission is the **WHY** for what we do in whatever the circumstances!

Jesus' call to our life mission

strengthens our identity,

builds our confidence,

fans into flames our passion,

shapes our aspirations,

purifies our motives,

sets our values,

and drives our behaviours.

Our individual Jesus calling keeps us going and keeps us growing through thick and thin.

So don't just equate our career or status with Jesus' call to our unique life mission.

Whenever we execute God's instructions today, we bend our wills toward His, reflect His re-creative intent and His life and community transforming power in everything we do.

Our good works bring the future into the present and become the extension o His story of rescue and cosmic restoration.

The Christian faith has a magnificent vision for the future that brings meaning, purpose, and hope; it is about seeing God, knowing God, and our unending participation in co-reigning with God.

The literal rendering of Eph. 2:10 is this, "For we are His handiwork, **created** in Christ Jesus the good/great works for which **we are purposed to do [i.e., aimed, designed, designated]** God has prepared beforehand so that **we should walk in them [i.e., to live into that divine arrangement; to live out God's specific purpose and goal]."**

In order for us to clearly grasp how we can live life to the full and becoming God's masterpiece, we must understand that we are "**created in Christ Jesus**" so it's all about how our story fits into Jesus' story and thus not the other way around. Our life story is part of and defined by Jesus' story.

Discover our individual part in God's redeeming mission.

⁴ Mancini, Will. Younique . Location 744. Kindle Edition.

We are born with a particular history, into a specific family with strengths and weaknesses, talents and limitations, personality and temperament, impacted by negative and positive experiences, but we are now living in “such-a-time-as-this moment”, confronting various challenges, and given a life mission.

As Søren Kierkegaard says, **“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”**

In order to discern Jesus’ call in life mission, we first need to take the effort and take the time to explore a “Back to the Future” Journey.

So I want to invite you to start this journey of exploration with the following two practical next steps:

1. About 10 yrs. ago I did the Gallup’s Strengths Finder test and my top five strengths are: Connectedness, Learner, Input, Communication, Ideation. This has increased my self-awareness and helped me to recognize my own limitations as well as to appreciate and lean on others’ strengths in different contexts, thus enabling me to stay on my personal and church mission.

Sign up for our next Living Your Strengths Webinar, June 9th. I invite you to discover how you are wired, what natural strengths you have, and how you can align them with Jesus’ calling to your life mission.

2. In the past few years I had the privilege of walking alongside many, helping them to develop their life mission statements. Let me give a couple examples: because they have clearly defined their life mission statements, one declined a work promotion and one totally change career, went back to school and started a new vocation.

I would be glad give you an overview of the framework so you could prayerfully consider if that’s something you’d want to pursue. Email me to find out about the possibility for personal coaching to develop your personal life mission statement.

Response moment: *Yes, I too want to discover Jesus’ calling to my life mission.*

Conclusion:

“Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures ... Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (Ps. 90:10, 12.)

To number my days – to reflect the richness of God’s love, grace, mercy, and wisdom – is to live out my life mission, responding to Jesus’ unique calling on my life.

Now let me share with you my mission statement which has become the compass for my journey in life until I see Jesus face to face and, hoping by His grace, hear Him saying this to me, “Good and faithful servant.”

My mission is to empower diverse peoples to break down walls of separation and to steward their God-given abilities and resources for kingdom advance.

Until I can tell my story from the vantage of God's action for me, I have not provided an authentically Christian answers to the basic, fundamental life questions such as "Who am I? What is the purpose of my life? Where am I going? What part do I play in God's story? and How should I live?"

Benediction:

You have been redeemed by grace, being tutored and sustained by grace as God's masterpiece, may God grant you the wisdom and strength to do what He has prepared in advance!

Dad Joke:

I went into a coffee shop and ordered an ***Espresso***. I didn't know what kind of coffee beans they used but it was so bad that I called it a ***Depresso***.