



Lesson Overview

Week of August 29

1 Life Need:

Discuss what it means to have a God-given purpose.

2 Bible Learning:

Understand what Paul said about our present troubles and heavenly future.

3 Bible Application:

Explore what God has for us to do now.

Suggested Material:

■ *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Reproducible Handout—My Designed Purpose

4 Life Response:

Live our purpose now until we go home.

Church/Home Theme:

We are the Body of Christ.

Lesson Focus:

Fulfill your purpose here until God calls you home.

Lesson Scripture:

2 Corinthians 4:16—5:10

An Eternal Hope

Those Temporary Trials—Paul encouraged the believers in Corinth, and thus all believers, not to get weary or faint-hearted. Every day our bodies are getting weaker, wasting away. But the inner person, the Holy Spirit working inside Christians, is getting more durable and more powerful, with fresh grace each day. Trials, challenges, problems, and other issues are present for all of us, but from God's perspective, it's all temporary. The heaviness of our daily issues is outweighed by what God has planned in eternity for His children.

Paul challenged the congregation at Corinth to see their present state through God's eyeglasses. This life is all temporary, soon to pass away. Then, we can get on with the real party that God has in store for His children in heaven.

Our New Body and Life—We will have new, heavenly bodies. One day when death takes place or Jesus returns, the old will be gone, and the new will come. We will be at home with Christ forever. Paul had no doubt about the reality of these things. The Christians who understand Paul's words long to leave the "tent" (2 Cor. 5:1) of this body and be in "our heavenly dwelling" (vs. 4). Believers walk around with confidence. They know when death visits, they go to their real home, in heaven, with the Lord. Paul said if he had a choice, he would choose heaven rather than staying around here on earth. But while we are here, we work to please God in everything we do. He has created us with a purpose, and we must fulfill that purpose as long as we are here.

As Your Students Arrive

As students arrive, instruct them to answer this question you have written on a board or sheet of newsprint: "What is your WHY?" Write their answers below the question. Explain that their "why" consists of the things they love and believe they were created to do.

Link to Last Week

Let a few of your students share how they showed love to others this past week.

1 Life Need

Discuss what it means to have a God-given purpose.

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An Eternal Hope

And this is Mrs. Jackson. She is one of our sweetest residents," said Kendra to the new nurse's aide, Nedria.

Dorothy Jackson had come to Meadowview Nursing Home one year ago. When she arrived, she had a garden variety of health challenges, coupled with her age of 88 and no one in her family capable of providing her with 24-hour care. Now, her health had begun to decline further, but she knew God was still using her for His purposes.

Mrs. Jackson's loving demeanor had drawn nursing home employees to seek her out. There was Desiree, who had told no one that she was five weeks pregnant and undecided about keeping the baby. There was Jayla, who shared everything that everyone was doing wrong. Also Martel, who told of being tired of his job and his marriage.

Mrs. Jackson provided godly counsel to her "nursing home children," as she called them. She also passionately prayed for and with them, when they allowed her to.

Two years later, when Devany came with three of her cousins to pack up her grandmother's nursing home room, she was greeted by many on the staff. They hugged, cried, and told her how much Mrs. Jackson had meant to them. One aide named Desiree wanted to show a picture of her baby boy.

"Here he is," said Desiree, handing Devany the cell phone. "His name is Hosea, and your grandmother was his great grandmother."

1. What things are you passionate about doing?

2. Do you think those things relate to your purpose in life? Explain your answer.

3. What are the problems of living outside of God's purpose for your life?

4. Can your purpose in life change over the years? Explain your answer.

LESSON FOCUS: Fulfill your purpose here until God calls you home.

Ask your students to read the anecdote in the student book, then form small groups and discuss their answers to **Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

For Question 1, students can list any number of things they are passionate about, from rebuilding cars to doing woodworking to teaching others about Jesus.

For Question 2, our passions may be our purpose, especially if we use them to glorify God. For example, a person who loves to rebuild old cars may donate those to people who need transportation, or they may share Christ at car shows they attend.

Question 3 highlights the significance of living your God-given purpose. Hopefully your students will agree that living outside of God's purpose for your life is aimless and meaningless, or worse, you can turn your passion into something that is not God-honoring.

Question 4 reminds us that as we grow and change in our lives, our purposes may also change, but we are always here for a purpose. God does not call us home until we have fulfilled whatever purpose He has for us, whether we can see that purpose immediately or not.

2 Bible Learning

Understand what Paul said about our present troubles and heavenly future.

The life we have now is only a prelude to the glorious, eternal life we have coming. But Paul told the Corinthians that God has a purpose for us now as well.

LOOKING BEYOND TODAY'S TROUBLES

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16—5:4 and review these statements:

- Paul said we should not lose heart because though our outward self is “wasting away” daily, our inward person is being renewed daily.
- Our light ordeals and current mishaps are storing rewards in heaven for us.
- We are focused on the unseen which is our forever dwelling house with God. Whatever we suffer here will not compare to the glory that’s in heaven.

BIBLE EXTRA

‘Our Light and Momentary Troubles’

While Paul put earthly suffering in its proper perspective in this passage, it is worth remembering that his own sufferings were not what most would call “light,” or even “momentary.” To prove a much different point later on—exposing false prophets who were unwilling to suffer for Christ—Paul catalogued some of his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, including five floggings, three beatings, a stoning, three shipwrecks (including a day and night on the open sea), and danger from opponents wherever he went. “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches” (vs. 28).

And yet, as he reminded the Corinthians earlier in chapter 4, all these sufferings served a higher purpose: “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. . . . So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you” (vss. 10, 12).

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

Paul reminded the Corinthians that despite their collective struggles, “we do not lose heart”—that despite their troubles and even the failure of their earthly bodies, they were “being renewed day by day” (vs. 16). Their “light and momentary” troubles were actually producing in them “an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (vs. 17). Their suffering was being used by God to renew them

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Looking Beyond Today's Troubles

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:4, KJV

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

2 Corinthians 4:16–5:4, NIV

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

^{5:1}For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ²Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Paul ended 2 Corinthians 4 the same way he opened it: by reminding the Corinthians that despite their (and his) struggles, “we do not lose heart” (vs. 16; see vs. 1).



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 514-517 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

inwardly, in preparation for that glory.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

Paul encouraged them to “fix [their] eyes . . . on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (vs. 18). Rather than focus on what would not last, Paul urged them to focus on what lay beyond this life: “a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands” (2 Cor. 5:1). The Corinthians could “know” their future with Christ was certain—and permanent.

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“Though outwardly we are wasting away”—that is, despite their troubles and even the progressive, inevitable failure of their earthly bodies—“yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (vs. 16). In fact, their troubles—which Paul regarded as “light and momentary”—were producing in them “an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (vs. 17). Whatever they suffered in this life would be nothing compared to the glory that lay ahead, God was using their sufferings to renew them inwardly, in preparation for that glory. The Corinthians only needed to look at Christ Himself for evidence of this truth.

Therefore, Paul told them to “fix [their] eyes . . . on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (vs. 18). Rather than focus on what would not last, Paul urged them to build on the foundation which is eternal: Christ. “For we know that . . . we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands” (2 Cor. 5:1). Therefore, the Corinthians could “know” their future with Christ was certain—and permanent.

But that was not their current state: “Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling” (vs. 2). Suffering was not something they needed to seek out; it was readily present. Even now, they and Paul longed to be “clothed” with their glorified bodies, and “not be found naked” (vs. 3). Paul reiterated these ideas once more in verse 4, then clarified the basis of their hope: “that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” Even in the midst of their suffering and weakness, the Corinthians could look toward certain victory in Christ.

5. *How did Paul encourage the Corinthians to view their sufferings?*

6. *What did the Corinthians need to focus on, in order to view their sufferings in the right perspective?*

7. *How did Paul describe the Corinthians’ (and his) hope in verses 2-4?*

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

Paul described them as “groan[ing], longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling” (vs. 2). Even now they longed for an end to their suffering

BIBLE EXTRA

Second Corinthians . . . Probably Isn’t Second

More than likely, 2 Corinthians isn’t actually Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians. In fact, many scholars believe it’s his fourth letter—and that 1 Corinthians is actually Paul’s second letter to the church at Corinth.

For instance, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:9, “I wrote to you in my [previous] letter not to associate with sexually immoral people.” This initial letter is sometimes referred to as the “warning letter.” Paul reiterated those warnings against sexual immorality throughout 1 Corinthians, especially in chapters 5–7.

Likewise, in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4 and again in 7:8-12, Paul referred to a letter written “out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears” (2 Cor. 2:4). As 1 Corinthians doesn’t seem to fit this description, it is believed that this “tearful letter” was written between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, and thus would have been Paul’s third letter to the Corinthians.

BIBLE EXTRA

Our Future Bodies

Paul had already written to the Corinthians to describe the glorified bodies of believers in 1 Corinthians 15:35-58. Paul spoke of the future resurrection of believers, and how they would be “clothed.” In this passage, Paul spoke of the spiritual body being: “raised imperishable. . . raised in glory” and “raised in power” (vss. 42-43). The believer’s future body will possess all it needs to accomplish everything God intends. Every believer will fully “bear the image of the heavenly” (vs. 49).

and to be “clothed” with their glorified bodies, rather than “be found naked” (vs. 3). However, even in the midst of their suffering and weakness, the Corinthians could look toward “be[ing] swallowed up by life” (vs. 4) and toward certain victory in Christ.

LIVING BY FAITH

Finally, read 2 Corinthians 5:5-10 with your students and discuss the following points:

- Paul told the Corinthians that God has fashioned us for a purpose and given us His Spirit. We are confident in His purposes for this body although we are away from our Creator.
- We live by faith, not by sight. Our goal is to please God whether in the body or out.
- Christ will one day judge everything

BIBLE EXTRA

The Believer’s Future ‘Clothing’

In 2 Corinthians 5:2, Paul wrote about his longing to be “clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling.” Over the centuries Bible interpreters have proposed many theories about when Christians will be granted eternal, spiritual bodies.

Some churches have taken the biblical comparison of death to sleep quite literally. Their view, called “sleep of the soul,” is based on passages such as Matthew 9:24 and 1 Corinthians 15:20, 51. It holds that dead believers remain in a state of unconsciousness until they are raised up at Christ’s second coming.

The teaching of most churches, however, is that while the body dies (to be raised later as a transformed body), the soul goes to be with the Lord. Jesus’ parable recorded in Luke 16:19-31, His statement to the thief on a cross (Luke 23:43), and Paul’s looking forward to dying so that he could enter Christ’s presence (Phil. 1:23) all seem to indicate a consciousness immediately after death. Thus most churches believe that the biblical references to sleep are but metaphors for death, and that the souls of dead Christians reside in the presence of the Lord.

we do, the good and the bad.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Not only did the Corinthians have the hope of one day being “at home with the Lord”; God Himself had “fashioned [them] for this very purpose,” and “given [them] the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (vs. 5). This “deposit” was only a speck of the glory to come. This knowledge should have bolstered the Corinthians, even in the midst of their current trials.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

Paul acknowledged that despite the indwelling of the Spirit, believers were simultaneously “at

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Living by Faith

2 Corinthians 5:5-10, KJV

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, I say, and will-ing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:5-10, NIV

⁵Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

⁶Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Paul next declared the basis for the Corinthians’ future hope: God Himself had “fashioned [them] for this very purpose,” and had “given [them] the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (vs. 5). God’s purposes never fail, and His Spirit had been given to believers to testify to that fact. And yet, it was only a “deposit”—a tiny fragment of the glory to come. This knowledge should have bolstered the Corinthians, even in the midst of their current trials. This was clearly Paul’s belief, in any case: “Therefore we are always confident” (vs. 6; see also vs. 8). Nonetheless, Paul acknowledged the tension between

home in the body [and] away from the Lord" (vs. 6). Therefore, they needed to "live by faith, not by sight" (vs. 7)—as if they were already "clothed . . . with [their] heavenly dwelling" (vs. 4). Through the Spirit's guidance and empowering, they could work even now toward their certain future, rather than being driven by "sight" or appearances.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 10

They were to "make it [their] goal to please" God (vs. 9), for one day "we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (vs. 10). Whatever they did in the body now would be ultimately

judged by God. Therefore, they needed to strive to please God now, while it was still a choice.

the "already" and the "not yet"—despite the indwelling of the Spirit, the Corinthians were "at home in the body [and] away from the Lord" (vs. 6). Therefore, they needed to "live by faith, not by sight" (vs. 7). As much as possible, they were to live as if they were already "clothed . . . with [their] heavenly dwelling" (vs. 4) and operating fully in God's presence. Because of the "deposit" of God's Spirit they had already received, this was already true in part. Through the Spirit's guidance and empowering, even now they could work toward their certain future, rather than being driven by "sight" or appearances. Verse 8 reiterated the Corinthians' struggle and hope from a more positive slant: "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

In the meantime, Paul declared that they were to "make it [their] goal to please" God (vs. 9). Whether Christ's return takes place while we are alive ("at home in the body") or dead ("away from it"), all believers will stand in Jesus' presence to give an account of our lives. That is why Paul established as his goal always pleasing the Lord. And by his example, he encouraged his readers to do the same. Whatever they did in the body now, God would judge in the future. This judgment would not determine whether one goes to heaven or hell; that is determined by faith in Christ (or the absence of faith). The future evaluation for Christians would assess their faithfulness as Christians.

Therefore, the Corinthians needed to strive to please God, while it was still a choice. By doing so, their confidence in God and their future with Him would be strengthened.

8. *What could the Corinthians base their hope on? What had God already given them?*

9. *How did Paul describe the Corinthians' (and his) current situation, and how were they to respond to it?*

10. *What were the Corinthians to do while still in their bodies, and why?*

BIBLE EXTRA

How to Please the Lord

Some people find it much easier to follow a set of rules devised by others than to search through the Scriptures to discover what is pleasing to the Lord. But the heart of a relationship with Christ means that we study God's Word to see how it applies to our everyday lives. Too often we compromise or settle for another person's viewpoint instead of discovering for ourselves how our lives can be most pleasing to the Lord.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

My Greatest Joy

There is a song by an anonymous writer with the following chorus: "My greatest joy on earth is this: to find in Him my highest existence." What an amazing statement of faith! It's an amazing life journey that everyone should endeavor to pursue. In essence the writer says their entire earthly goal is to find in God their highest existence. The highest existence comes from heaven, but yet fulfilled on earth.

3 Bible Application

Explore what God has for us to do now.

Photocopy this page and give instructions to each group. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit and give them to the group using it.



Handout: 'My Designed Purpose'

Read the instructions on the handout sheet, answer the questions, and share your answers with the rest of the group.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read "Make an Impact with Your Purpose" and answer **Questions 11, 12, 13, and 14**. The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Those good works were made just for us and are waiting for us to do. Sometimes we don't clearly see those works because we start thinking we are too insignificant, too old, too feeble, or too unqualified to do those works. When we think that, we are telling God that He cannot use us anymore and He is not powerful enough to help us do what He has called us to do.

What Sets My Soul on Fire

Have each person in your group make a list of important dates in their lives such as your birthdate, the years you graduated from high school, college, or got married, and so forth up until this year. Write beside those years what "set your soul on fire" at that time and how that may have changed over the years. For this year, be sure to show what your passion is at this time. Sometimes that passion is your God-given purpose. The list will show that people can have multiple passions at the same time. A man might be passionate about being a father, his vocation, and serving his local church; all of these passions can be pursued if there is balance and intentionality.

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Make an Impact with Your Purpose

Scripture is clear that God made us for a purpose—His purpose—and we are called to fulfill that purpose in every stage of our lives. As a boy, David glorified God by defeating Goliath when no other Israelites would stand up to the Philistine giant. Josiah came to the throne of Judah at age eight and started a revival that changed the nation. As a teenager, Daniel defied the king along with his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Timothy was a young pastor who stood against the pagan society of Ephesus.

Growing older may change our purpose, but we are still working for the Lord and fulfilling His purpose as long as we are here. As 2 Corinthians 4:16 reminds us, our physical bodies may be "wasting away" but inwardly God is renewing us every day. Moses followed the Lord and led the people until the age of 120. The Gospel of Luke says that the prophetess Anna, at the age of 84, worshiped in the temple every day.

Seniors have much to contribute to younger generations as a result of their long lives and their faithful service. Their purpose is far more than just sitting in a retirement home. For example, their purpose may be to act as daily prayer warriors supporting the ministries of their church. The church advances on the wings of prayer.

Whatever our age or stage in life, we must discover our gifts and cover the earth with them. We can be a blessing to those around us and even impact the whole world.

- 11.** *Why is finding our God-given purpose in life so important?*
- 12.** *Why may we not see what our purpose is ourselves?*
- 13.** *How might Ephesians 2:10 help us find our purpose?*
- 14.** *Why might we think as we get older that God has no purpose for us anymore?*

4 Life Response

Live our purpose now until we go home.

We have an amazing heavenly home awaiting us! Before we go there, however, we should fulfill our purpose here and be a blessing now on earth.

Ask students to read “Our Mission on Earth” in their books and do the activity there. They may fill in the blank with one of the things they love since that may be their life’s purpose now. It could be anything from praying 24/7 for the ministries of your church, to helping their grandchildren learn about the Lord, to teaching a small group. God has

given every Christian gifts He wants us to use for Him.

End the lesson in prayer and praise, thanking God for filling our lives with purpose so that we can change the world.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week’s *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn’t be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week’s Lesson

Next week, we will begin a new quarter of lessons studying how we celebrate our Creator. Read Exodus 15:11-21 and have your students think about what kinds of celebrations they have attended over the years.

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Our Mission on Earth

Heaven is our eternal home where we will live forever. God has given each person a particular mission here on earth to fulfill as long as we are here. He has equipped us to fulfill that mission. We should remain confident that we have what it takes to complete this unique plan.

► *Finish this sentence as a commitment to complete your life’s purpose here on earth: “I will trust God to help me _____ as long as I am here. I give my life to You as a humble offering.”*

KEY VERSE

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. —2 Corinthians 5:1, KJV

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. —2 Corinthians 5:1, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of August 30 through September 5

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Exodus 14:1-9—God Hardens Pharaoh’s Heart.
- Tues.** Exodus 14:10-20—Don’t Just Do Something; Stand There!
- Wed.** Exodus 14:21-31—Victory by the Sea.
- Thurs.** Luke 1:67-75—Blessed Be God Our Savior.
- Fri.** 1 Corinthians 15:51-58—Victory in Jesus.
- Sat.** Exodus 15:1-10—Moses Sings of God’s Triumph.
- Sun.** Exodus 15:11-21—Moses and Miriam Praise God.