

## *What am I doing here?*

Welcome to session one of Walking with Purpose. I am so glad you've joined us in this series, where we'll explore why we're here and how that impacts our living! I'm trusting God that this small group time will be a highlight of your week and awaken within you meaning and joy like you've never before experienced!

Let's face it: we all need a purpose, and Edwin was no exception. For years, everyone around him dismissed Edwin as old, insignificant and even difficult. He would spend hours each day making repetitive circular motions with his hands, getting very agitated when those in his nursing home tried to deter him. You see, Edwin had Alzheimer's disease...often saying and doing things that made little sense to those around him. As more about the disease was discovered, some nurses in his home delved into his past. They interviewed Edwin's family to discover what his life and interests consisted of before Alzheimer's claimed his mind and freedom. They discovered that his occupation had been that of a saddle shiner! All of a sudden, his constant hand motions made perfect sense. Edwin wanted to do what was second nature to him: shine more saddles! His understanding and forward-thinking nurse wasted no time. She purchased a used saddle and polishing cream...and Edwin's smile lit up the room. Every day he got up and could be found meticulously and tirelessly polishing that saddle. Because, you see...having a saddle...a purpose, changed everything for Edwin. ***You too***, my friend, have been created with a purpose! And discovering what it is will change everything!



### **Fellowship**

1. What do you do that brings you the most fulfillment?
2. What do you perceive your purpose to be right now?



### **Discipleship**

I don't know about you, but I need a reason to get up every morning! I need to feel that there are people who need me and that my life means something. The times I've found myself depressed and low, or with feelings of inferiority, are times when my purpose and feelings of uselessness gain the upper hand. If you're like me, this study we are embarking on will be a great encouragement to you! God created your life to have

significance! In fact, He created you with not just one, but *five* distinct purposes! The foundational truth to all of these purposes we'll discover in Colossians 1:16. Let's read it together. "For by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."

You were created *by* God and *for* God! Let's not miss the significance! You! Insert your name here! I, \_\_\_\_\_, was created by God! God didn't have to create you! True, He is a relational God, but within the Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they get a lot of fellowship amongst themselves. Yet God desired a relationship with you! When you fully come to understand that foundational truth, you will never be the same again. To know deep down that you are so special that God wanted to spend the rest of eternity with you? That's enough to banish insecurity and a low self esteem forever!

Maria had grown up knowing that she was different from the other kids, and she hated it. She was born with a cleft palate and had to bear the jokes and stares of cruel children who teased her non-stop about her misshaped lip, crooked nose, and garbled speech.

She was convinced that no one, outside her family, could ever love her ... until she entered Mrs. Nieves' class. Mrs. Nieves had a warm smile, a round face, and shiny black hair. While everyone in her class liked their teacher, Maria *loved* her.

In the 1950's, it was common for teachers to give their children an annual hearing test. However, in Maria's case, in addition to her cleft palate, she was barely able to hear out of one ear. Embarrassed by her impairments, and wanting to hide them, she would cheat on the test each year. The "whisper test" was given by having a child walk to the classroom door, turn sideways, close one ear with a finger, and then repeat something which the teacher whispered.

Maria turned her bad ear towards her teacher and just *pretended* to cover her good ear. She knew that teachers would often say things like, "The sky is blue," or "What color are your shoes?" But not on that day. Surely, God put seven words in Mrs. Nieves' mouth that changed Maria's life forever. When the "whisper test" came, Maria heard the words: "I wish you were my little girl." Maria was wanted. In the same way, God wants you for His child! *You*, with all your faults and impairments, are *so* loved and accepted, that the God of the universe wants you to be part of *His* family!

So before we go any further, I want to encourage you to enter into a relationship with God if you haven't already done so. He created you for fellowship with Him and a life filled with purpose. But until you align yourself with *His* purpose, you will never be completely fulfilled. Each of us must accept His gift of forgiveness for our sins and admission into His family. Once we've done that, we begin the great adventure of living a life *for* God. It's His kids who bring Him pleasure, and bringing pleasure to God is our main purpose in life and the basis for everything we do. My kids sure bring me pleasure! I get so much joy out of just watching them be themselves and enjoying life. They don't have to be *doing* something productive every minute of the day for me to enjoy them.

One reason my wife and I decided to have children was to enjoy fellowship with them, and God enjoys the same thing. Bringing Him pleasure is our life's purpose and something we'll enjoy learning about in the following weeks.

Andor Foldes, an accomplished pianist, talks about two kisses he's received that changed the course of his life. His first recollection of an affirming word was at age seven when his father kissed him and thanked him for helping in the garden. He remembers it over six decades later, as though it were yesterday. But the account of another kiss that changed his life says a great deal about our inner need for purpose.

At age sixteen, Foldes was already a skilled pianist. But he was at his personal all-time low because of a conflict with his piano teacher. In the midst of that very troubled year, however, one of the most renowned pianists of the day came to the city to perform: Emil von Sauer. Sauer requested that young Foldes play for him, so he obliged the master with some of the most difficult musical works written. When he finished, Sauer walked over to him and kissed him on the forehead. It served as both a benediction and a blessing. Foldes was able to give the gift of pleasure to a master musician...and you and I have the unfathomable privilege of pleasing our master as well! He delights in you just being you, walking in the purpose He created you for!

You know, it's all about Him, isn't it? The news is filled with stories of otherwise successful people who have taken their own lives because they never understood that there was more meaning to their lives than what they could see, feel, or create for themselves. Living for our own purposes will leave us feeling empty. We may experience satisfaction for awhile, but *long-term* peace and fulfillment...and a reason to get up every morning...come from living a life for Him!

3. Read Colossians 1:16-20. How does the truth that you were made by God challenge you to a positive self-image?
4. How might the fact that you were made *for* Him challenge your priorities? Life-long goals?
5. Talk about the phrase: "When the will of God crosses the will of man, something has to die."
6. Read Psalm 138:8. How does this verse encourage you?
7. From the above passage, how could a person hinder God's purpose for their life? What are some ways to safeguard against that?



## **Ministry**

8. Minister to each other by having a person or two share their individual salvation stories. What were the circumstances of your entrance into God's family? (Every 7<sup>th</sup> week we meet will be a celebration—those might be good times for others to share)



## **Evangelism**

9. Think of the names of 5 people you know who are living without purpose. Write down their names and commit to praying for them during this series. This week, try to initiate a discussion with at least one over what you've learned today.



## **Worship**

10. Read Psalm 139:1-16, taking turns reading each verse.

11. Spend a few minutes in prayer for the names in #9, and each other, as we embark on our journey to purpose-filled lives.