

## *The best is yet to come*

Welcome back to Session Three of Walking with Purpose! Last week we discussed God's report card, and I trust that you went away motivated to do your best and get good grades! Now, when I was young, my parents gave me a monetary reward for every high grade I received. My brother and I looked forward to report card day, because (if we had worked hard) we knew some spending money was coming! My parents wanted us to study hard and do our best just from the sheer *joy* of learning...but they knew very well that we needed a bit of "motivation". We needed a tangible reminder that all the blood, sweat and tears of studying would produce what we felt was a lasting reward! We would be willing to spend long hours studying while our friends were playing, IF we knew it would somehow be "worth it" in the end.



### *Fellowship*

1. What motivates you to do well in your job or school?



### *Discipleship*

Isn't it interesting that God motivates His children with rewards? Even Jesus was looking forward to *His* heavenly reward for His faithfulness to His Father's purpose on earth! In John 17:5 Jesus says, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." In Revelation 3:21, He encourages us: "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." The Father rewarded the Son for a faithful job well done. But He deserves it, doesn't He? Jesus was perfect and *perfectly* completed God's plan for His life! Of *course* He should be rewarded! But us? *We* fail time and time again, could never make it to heaven without His help...and yet our generous God promises not only an eternity with Him but *also* rewards for lives spent fulfilling *our* purpose! The New Testament is full of God's promises of reward for a life lived for Him. Listen to just a few: "...and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will *reward* you. If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his *reward*. For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will *reward* each person according to what he has done. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy,

because *great* is your *reward* in heaven. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your *reward* will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. If what he has built survives, he will receive his *reward*. You know that the Lord will *reward* everyone for *whatever* good he does, whether he is slave or free; you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a *reward*. It's the Lord Christ you are serving."

Wow! Just reading those verses gives me a motivation to do well that far surpasses any grade I've aimed for or goal I've set! You see, the best is yet to come! God describes our lives with terms such as a wisp of smoke; a mist that will soon pass away. He tells us that we are strangers and aliens to this earth. To not get too comfortable, because this isn't all there is! This life is simply a test; a warm-up; a temporary assignment; a dress rehearsal. It's like preschool in preparation for eternity! How many of us would want to go back and continually live in preschool when we know there is so much more to life? OK...if you're under major stress, maybe that sounds pretty good right now. But we were meant for so much more! At the most, we'll spend 80, maybe 100 years on this earth. Our earthly rewards and accomplishments will only last as long as these frail bodies. But living a life of purpose gives us an eternal perspective and meaning, because the rewards and results will endure forever!

Luis was a little boy who lived far out in the country in the late 1800s. He was 12 years old and had never in all his life seen a circus. You can imagine his excitement, when one day a poster went up at school announcing that on the next Saturday a traveling circus was coming to the nearby town. He ran home with the glad news and the question, "Daddy, can I go?" Although the family was poor, the father sensed how important this was to the lad. "If you do your Saturday chores ahead of time," he said, "I'll see to it that you have the money to go." Come Saturday morning, the chores were done and the little boy stood by the breakfast table, dressed in his best clothes. His father reached down into the pocket of his overalls and pulled out a dollar bill-the most money the little boy had possessed at one time in all his life. The father cautioned him to be careful and then sent him on his way to town. Luis was so excited, his feet hardly seemed to touch the ground. As he neared the outskirts of the village, he noticed people lining the streets, and he worked his way through the crowd until he could see what was happening. Lo and behold, it was the approaching spectacle of a circus parade! The parade was the grandest thing this lad had ever seen. Caged animals snarled as they passed, bands beat their rhythms and sounded shining horns, midgets performed acrobatics while flags and ribbons swirled overhead. Finally, after everything had passed where he was standing, the traditional circus clown, with floppy shoes, baggy pants, and a brightly painted face, brought up the rear. As the clown passed by, the little boy reached into his pocket and took out that precious dollar bill. Handing the money to the clown, the boy turned around and went home. What had happened? The boy thought he had seen the circus when he had only seen the parade!

Are you experiencing all that God has for you? The Christian life is a marvelous adventure, an exciting journey. Many people, including Christians, seem to be content to

float in a sea of mediocrity, settling for second best. They live as if this is all there is and life ends with the grave.

Ellis Island was once the biggest immigration processing center in the U.S. It processed thousands of immigrants a day. All of these immigrants left their homelands through much difficulty to come to “the land of promise.” They believed they could make themselves a new and better life there. At the time, a trip to America took at least a month by boat. The new arrivals stayed in dormitory rooms while they were being processed. They wouldn’t be very impressive to our eyes today, but I wonder what they looked like to the 19th century immigrants. Maybe to some of them, especially after months on a boat, they looked luxurious. Maybe it was the grandest room they had ever seen. And imagine with me that one person is so overwhelmed with the greatness of this room that he decides he will stay there forever. And so, when they try to finish processing him, he stalls. He hangs up his pictures above the bunk. He unpacks all his clothes and moves right in. You would want to grab him and tell him how foolish he was being. You would want to explain to him that this place was a dump, and that the country has so much more to offer him.

And yet, how often do we do the same thing? Surely, this earth is amazing and grand. But it is only the processing center. It’s still just the gateway. Yet we can become convinced that things like wealth, and fame, power, and knowledge is the climax of our existence. We are like the immigrant who thought the dormitory was his final destination.

In 1973 Gary Kildall wrote the first popular operating system for personal computers. In 1980, IBM approached him about developing their operating system. But Kildall snubbed IBM officials at a crucial meeting. The day IBM came calling with the offer of a lifetime, he chose to fly his new airplane. The frustrated IBM executives turned instead to Bill Gates, founder of a small company named Microsoft. Fourteen years later Bill Gates was worth more than eight billion dollars. Kildall was a smart guy who didn’t realize how big the operating system would become. Imagine the regret! Yet it’s nothing compared to the potential regret we all face if we live for temporary reward rather than eternal. Let me repeat that. It’s nothing compared to the potential regret we all face if we live for temporary reward rather than eternal.

The Bible says that no eye has seen and no mind can even conceive what God has in store for those who love Him! God has come calling, and wants *us* to be part of His eternal purpose! It’s the offer of a lifetime. What will you do with it?

2. Read Psalm 33:11. Name some of the plans of the Lord that endure forever. What are the purposes of His heart?
3. How can you align your purposes with His in order to have a life with meaning?
4. Read I Peter 1:13-17. List the commands given in this passage. Which do you struggle with most?

5. Read Hebrews 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 4:18. How did Jesus view Himself as a temporary resident of earth?
6. How will that help you deal with difficulties this week?
7. Read I Peter 5:4. How does knowing you will carry your “report card” of earth for eternity challenge you to do your best now? What might you change about your life?



## **Ministry**

8. We all experience fatigue at times, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. Minister to each other using these verses as you share your individual prayer requests and struggles. We'll pray together in a moment as we focus on worship.



## **Evangelism**

9. Spend a minute of silent prayer thinking of those within your circle of influence whose only hope is in this life.



## **Worship**

10. Mercy is defined as “not getting what we deserve.” Grace is “getting what we don't deserve.” Worship God for His grace today seen in His reward system found in Matthew 19:28-30. Pray for the requests and people God brought to mind in the last few minutes.