

Community & Purpose

Start Here - 10 minutes

Why do we exist?

This is a question that has been asked by every person from every generation since the beginning of human existence. So let's try to answer this question in the next 10 minutes! But seriously, take a few moments as a group to discuss this question and maybe write down a few of the answers you come up with. Go.

Now, read Genesis 1:27-31. - 5 minutes

These opening chapters of Genesis describe the ideal relationships between God, humanity, and creation – things are “**very good**.” And these verses contain the first descriptions of humanity that we find in the Bible, presenting an ideal for what humanity can be. The Biblical authors understand humanity as being tasked with ruling creation as representatives of God, **image bearers**. But it is important to note that this image-bearing is not assigned to an individual human, but to humanity as a whole. The text doesn't ask “why do **I** exist?” but instead “why do **we** exist?” Here, our purpose as humanity is tied up in our community.

Ruling creation as God's representatives isn't just a blank slate, either; there is a particular way in which this text describes rulership. We've been discussing flourishing in community, and that is exactly what this text is pointing to as well – a flourishing that flows *out* of community. Notice that the first thing God adds to this invitation is a description of how to keep everything well-fed. In the ideal relationships between God, humanity, and creation, humanity looks to God to understand how to best represent God together as we care for one another and the world around us. To sum up: love like Jesus does.

Easier said than done. It can be hard to find a good example of this, which is maybe why Genesis keeps it in the world of the garden. The steps involved in making a garden flourish are understandable.

Understanding how to help the world around us flourish can be tougher. This is another reason we need community to accomplish our purpose. As we discussed last week, communities are known by what they are for. United in purpose, we can equip one another, filling in each other's gaps.

As a group, read the following passages – 5 minutes

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.

Hebrews 10:24&25

And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.

Questions - 25 minutes

How do you see the flourishing purpose of humanity and the necessity of community in these passages?

How do the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus reframe the idea of representing God and ruling?

Do you think that one can help the world around them flourish without having the resources to experience that same growth and wholeness in one's own life?

What are some areas of your world that you feel drawn to love like Jesus does?

What can we do to "consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds"? In other words, how can we encourage one another to represent Jesus in those areas we've just discussed?

Close in Prayer - 10 minutes

Take some time to share what is going on in everyone's life and how the group can encourage and support one another. Have someone close in prayer.