

May 2, 2004
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“God’s Purposes for the Church”
Acts 2: 42-47

God’s Purposes For You

During Lent we read and studied the five purposes of God for our lives. Do you remember what they are? We were created to bring glory to God through:

1. **WORSHIP:** You were planned for God’s pleasure, so your purpose is to love God through *worship*. God wants our worship to be motivated by love, thanksgiving, and delight, not duty. But worship is not just something we do only on Sunday morning. We worship God by enjoying Him. Worship is far more than praising, singing, and praying to God. Worship is **a lifestyle of enjoying God, loving Him, and giving ourselves to be used for His purposes.** We bring God glory by *Worshipping* Him.
2. **FELLOWSHIP:** You were formed for God’s family, so your purpose is to identify with His church through *fellowship*. We bring God glory by **Loving Other Believers.** When you were born again, you became part of God’s family. Following Christ is not just a matter of believing; it also includes *belonging* and learning to love the family of God. It is your responsibility to learn how to love as God does, because God is love, and it honors Him.
3. **DISCIPLESHIP:** You were created to become like Christ, so your purpose is to grow to maturity through *discipleship*. We bring God glory by **Becoming Like Christ.** God gave you a new life and a new nature when you accepted Christ. Now, for the rest of your life on earth, God wants to continue the process of changing your character. The more you develop Christlike character, the more you will bring glory to God.
4. **MINISTRY:** You were shaped for serving, so your purpose is to show love to others through *ministry*. We bring God glory by **Serving** with our gifts. The way you’re “wired” is not an accident. God didn’t give you your abilities for selfish purposes. They were given to benefit others.
5. **EVANGELISM:** You were made for a mission, so your purpose is to share God’s message through *evangelism*. We bring God glory by **Telling Others About Him.** God doesn’t want His love and purposes kept a secret. Once we know the truth, He expects us to share it with others.

We were made by God and for God. We find fulfillment in life only when we know God through faith in Jesus Christ and live for Him: Worshipping Him, loving other believers, becoming like Christ, serving Him, and telling others about Him.

The Book of Acts is often called "The Acts of the Apostles." It is an account of the things the Apostles *did* (it is called *Acts*). After the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, He appeared many times to the apostles. He told them that after He left them (to ascend or go back into heaven) He would send the Holy Spirit to be in them and He (the Holy Spirit) would give them power to be witnesses for Christ, empowering them for life and service. The book would be more properly described as the Acts of the Holy Spirit working in and through the Apostles. The apostles were to pass on the purposes of God in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit would empower all who believed the apostles message to live out God's purposes.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. NRSV. [The day of Pentecost is considered the birthday of the church. It is the day the Holy Spirit was given to believers, the church.]. The day of Pentecost was an annual feast celebrated [by the Jews] on "the day after the seventh Sabbath" after Passover (Lev 23:15-16 NLT "From the day after the Sabbath, the day the bundle of grain was lifted up as an offering, count off seven weeks. Keep counting until the day after the seventh Sabbath, fifty days later, and bring an offering of new grain to the LORD). The word "Pentecost" means "fifty," so named because this feast was celebrated fifty days after Passover. Jesus was crucified at Passover time, and he ascended forty days after his resurrection. The Holy Spirit came fifty days after the Resurrection, ten days after the Ascension. The identification of Pentecost with "firstfruits" likely has a real significance here, since the three thousand who came to faith in Christ this day [i.e. joined the church through repentance and faith after Peter's sermon] were the "firstfruits" of many thousands who would follow.

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Acts 2:42-47 NLT

42 They [i.e. the 3000 that believed that day] joined with the other believers and **devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer.**

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 **And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had.** 45 **They sold their possessions and shared the proceeds with those in need.** 46 **They worshiped together** at the Temple each day, **met in homes** for the Lord's Supper, and **shared their meals** with great joy and generosity-- 47 **all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.**

From these verses we can see the activities of the church; the things the church is called to do; The purpose of the church or the reason for the church to exist.

God's Purposes For The Church

1. We read that they shared in the Lord's Supper, prayer, and praising God. They listened to teachings; and there was awe, and miracles. That sounds like WORSHIP. When we come together in the church for worship we may share in the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion (as we did today). We spend time in prayer. We listen to a teaching or

sermon. We sense the presence of God and we are in awe of His presence, praising Him for the great miracles He does. (The results of Worship is: We **Magnify** God.)

2. They met together, shared everything they had, worshiped together, met in homes in small groups as well as in large corporate gatherings. They shared meals, and there was love and unity. That sounds like FELLOWSHIP. Church is not just a place for believing but for belonging. We love one another, help and encourage one another and learn that we need one another and find that membership in a local church is vital. (The results of Fellowship is: **Membership**.)

3. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and applied them to their lives so that they could grow spiritually. We call that DISCIPLESHIP. The church is a place to learn about Jesus and to be motivated to be like Him. (The result of Discipleship is: **Maturity**.)

4. They shared everything with each other and gave to those in need. That's SERVICE / MINISTRY. In the church we find opportunities to serve God by serving others and through these opportunities we discover our gifts. (Note: usually we try to discover our gift first before we will serve. It should be the other way around. Serve as a way to discover your gift.) (The result of Service is: **Ministry**.)

5. And the Lord added those who were being saved. Fulfilling their MISSION of EVANGELISM through outreach. Evangelism is the mission of the church. (The result of Outreach is: **Mission**.)

God's Purposes For His Church Identical to His Purposes For You

Have you noticed? God's purposes for His Church are identical to His purposes for each of us individually in our life. We find fulfillment and meaning in life by living for God and His purposes for us and God's purposes for His Church helps us to fulfill God's purposes for our life. Therefore the purpose of our church must be: Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry and Evangelism. Not just one of these or two or three of these but all of these; not one or some emphasized more than others but a balance of all of them working together. Why? This is God's will for His church to help you fulfill God's will for your life.

God designed His church specifically to help you fulfill the five purposes He has for your life bringing fulfillment to your life:

1. **Worship** helps you focus on God to **magnify** Him as we **exalt** His name together.
2. **Fellowship** helps you face life's problems through **Membership** in the Church to **encourage** you.
3. **Discipleship** helps fortify your faith for spiritual **maturity** through education to **edify** you.
4. **Service** helps find your talents and spiritual gifts in **ministry** to **equip** you.
5. **Outreach** helps fulfill your **mission** to **evangelize** the world.