

SERIES: DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE?
PART 8.5: THE BIG PICTURE

I. Recap of the Series: *Do You Know Who You Are?*

Over the past 11 weeks, Pastor Scott has taught us, in his series *Do You Know Who You Are?*, that...

A. If we have chosen to follow Christ, and have made Him the leader of our lives, then the Bible says we are:

- 1. In Christ**
- 2. A Saint**
- 3. Blessed**
- 4. Appreciated**
- 5. Saved**
- 6. Reconciled**
- 7. Afflicted**

In the upcoming weeks, Pastor Scott is going to continue laying out for us what the Bible says our identity is in Christ. But today, I want to take a step back and look at the big picture. I want to take a 30,000 foot view of the story of God's people as told in the Bible, from beginning to end. I want all of us to understand why, when I choose to follow Christ, what is the reason I become all of these things? If I am "In Christ", why am I a saint? Why am I blessed? Why am I appreciated? Why am I saved? Why am I reconciled? Why am I afflicted? What's the big picture plan and purpose God has in granting these realities, privileges, and responsibilities to me? In other words, why do I care about what the Bible says about me?

A few weeks ago, before I taught our last life development 401 seminar (or LD401), which covers the Mission Purpose, someone asked me to meet with them. I had invited them to LD401 for months, probably even years, and they had always declined. They were very honest with me in our meeting, which I appreciated. They said they were excited to attend Meet The Pastors and take LD101 with Pastor Scott Wood to understand what it meant to follow Jesus, get baptized, and become a member of this church family. They were eager to take LD201 with Pastor Rick Whitlow and learn about growing in their relationship with Jesus through Bible reading, prayer, worship, fasting, and

small group attendance. They were enthusiastic about LD301 with Pastor Kathe Wood and learning about their SHAPE for ministry, their spiritual gifts, their passions, abilities, personality, and their experiences that had prepared them to serve. But then, like most of us, they stalled on their life development journey. They got up to the plate, hit a home run, but stopped at third base. I appreciated their honesty and openness as they confessed that they always had an excuse not to take the LD401 seminar—too busy, or sick, or had a family event, or had sports with their kids. They admitted that these were all excuses. But rather than just make excuses, and stunt their growth, and never fully understand the plans and purposes God has for them, they took the terrifying step of sitting down and chatting with me about it. They said, “I have some questions and concerns about what is going to happen in the life development 401 seminar, because, frankly, I have some fears and pre-conceived notions that are holding me back.” So we talked through those fears and misgivings, and in 30 minutes, they went from being unwilling to take the seminar to eager, enthusiastic, and excited to take it. So what happened in those 30 minutes? We simply talked about the big picture.

Now more than ever, people of all ages want to understand the big picture, we are more connected now, less aware of the Bible as a culture, yet we have more information at our fingertips than ever before in history. We are also the most distracted, the most depressed, and the most in search of meaning in our lives. We have more access to people globally than ever before, and yet we are the most self-centered and self-obsessed culture ever. Now more than ever, we long to see the big picture.

II. What is the Big Picture according to God?

In other words, what is God’s purpose for creating us?

A. We were created to relate to God and become like Jesus

“Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.’” Genesis 1:26a

“Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

**This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.”
Ephesians 1:4-5**

“For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” Romans 8:29

“Just as we are now like the earthly man [Adam], we will someday be like the heavenly man [Jesus Christ].” 1 Corinthians 15:49

“Dear friends, we are already God’s children, but He has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He really is.” 1 John 3:2b

B. We were designed to serve God’s purpose and to live forever

**“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.”
Ephesians 2:10**

“Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end.” Ecclesiastes 3:11

**“And this is the plan: At the right time He will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.”
Ephesians 1:10**

C. We were commanded to continue and complete Christ’s mission

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20

**“Just as You sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.”
John 17:18**

“And then [Jesus] told them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.’” Mark 16:15

“It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of [Jesus’] name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’” Luke 24:47

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

In our context, this roughly means: in Los Angeles county, throughout the United States, to your language and ethnic group, and in every country and nation!

D. God’s timetable for history hinges around us completing our mission

“So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking Him, ‘Lord, has the time come for You to free Israel and restore our kingdom?’ He replied, ‘The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know.’” Acts 1:6-8

“[God] wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:4

“And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.” Matthew 24:14

III. What is holding me back from participating in God’s big picture?

God created humans in His likeness to have a family. Before He returns to gather His family and restore the new heaven and the new earth, our only job of eternal value is to invite others into His family. Once every nation, tribe and tongue has been given that opportunity, Christ will return. As of right now, we are roughly 60% of the way there.

A. My lack of awareness of God's plan: Denial

I can struggle with believing that we have a mission or that God will provide for it. I've laid out some of the biblical foundations, but if you read the Bible, you will see the truth of God's big picture everywhere.

“But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light.” 1 Peter 2:9

Another compelling piece of evidence is the reality of human history. Look at history. There were possibly 100 followers of Jesus in the year 0 AD, now there are how many? In about 2000 years? The fact that Christ came and that since then the gospel has spread all over the world is an undeniable fact. God is in the process of redeeming His creation and He's going to finish it, and He's inviting us to participate!

B. My worry that I will lose whatever is most dear to me: Fear

I'm afraid that I will be rejected and lose friends, family, status, career, prestige, power, possessions, etc.

“Then Peter began to speak up. ‘We've given up everything to follow You,’ he said. ‘Yes,’ Jesus replied, ‘and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for My sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life.’ Mark 10:28-30

“When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.” 1 Corinthians 9:22-23

C. My belief that I'm unworthy of God's mission: Shame

I may be carrying shame over my past failure sharing Jesus with people. Is this holding me back?

“Jesus called out to them, ‘Come, follow Me, and I will show you how to fish for people!’” Matthew 4:19

It is important to realize that people go through a process in coming to faith in Christ and they must be approached differently depending on where they are in the process. This is called “Receptivity.” How open is someone to the Good News? Treat others with wisdom and discernment!

“Evangelism is helping people discover how God is already at work in their lives.” Sam Williams

Before someone is receptive, they are resistant. **How do we handle someone who is resistant?**

- 1. Pray for them to become receptive**
- 2. Build a relationship through love and service**
- 3. Invite them to a fun bridge event (like Easter Egg Hunt)**
- 4. What NOT to do with resistant people: DON'T ARGUE!**

“Again I say, don’t get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people’s hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil’s trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.” 2 Timothy 2:23-26

“Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity.” Colossians 4:5

If you enjoyed today’s talk, it’s basically a preview of LD 401. In that seminar we will go a little deeper into these concepts. You will discover your life's mission, and you will overcome your denial, shame, and fears and become comfortable sharing your relationship with Jesus with others.

“For ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ But how can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them?”
Romans 10:13-14

Let's pray.