



Unto Full Stature Ministries



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Series 1. The eternal Purpose

S1.E3. Relationship and Fellowship

Relationship and fellowship are distinct from one another. One may have a relationship but no fellowship and another may have fellowship without a relationship. Fullness of life is when we have both a true relationship and fellowship with God and with one another.

The Eternal Purpose

To begin laying a foundation for understanding God's eternal purpose, let's read from Eph. 3.8-12, hearing it as a word from God to each one individually,

"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been

*hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, **according to the eternal purpose** which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. ” Eph. 3.8-12*

Mankind has been unraveling natural mysteries since the beginning of time, such as the laws of nature: gravitation, electro-magnetism, cause and effect relationships, the preservation of energy, and even attempting to establish moral laws of what is good and what is evil—still eating from that tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But man, left to himself, alienated from the life of God and the Tree of Life, who is Christ, can never understand Divine laws because they operate outside of creation; these are spiritual laws that are eternal; these are laws that are not imposed outwardly calling for strict obedience and compliance to external laws as under the Old Covenant. For example, the Old Covenant was established with this mandate from God,

*Ex. 19.5-6—“Now therefore, “if” you will indeed **obey** My voice and **keep** My covenant, “then” you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*

So do you understand the Old Covenant was conditional, “if” you obey God’s commandments and keep them, “then” you will be rewarded with blessings; “if” you failed to obey “then” there will be consequences. The spiritual laws of the New Covenant in Christ are quite different, these laws are inward and spontaneous to life, as it is written in Heb. 8.10-11,

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.” Heb. 8.10-11

So Divinely written spiritual laws are placed into the mind of the believer and put into his heart by God in the person of the Holy Spirit. And the great result of this Covenant is not confined to earthly blessings and curses but results in coming to “*know*” God, to know Him in the persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This word for “know” in the Greek literally means to learn first-hand or by experience. These laws are based in life and not a system of religious practices containing outward commandments and rituals.

This “knowing” God requires revelation, and revelation requires a rebirth of our spirits, and the rebirth of the spirit requires the abiding presence of the Spirit of Christ in the believer. The Spirit of Christ is that which is written upon our minds and put into our hearts; His life in us—what a marvelous revelation and blessing to the one who believes and receives Him into their hearts. To know this is Godly wisdom.

According to our Ephesians opening scripture, this wisdom *might be made known by the church*; the eternal God wants us to be able to look into what has been a mystery since

the beginning of time, but with new understanding, being able to see with renewed spiritual eyes that allow His light to enter in, the light that brings revelation and understanding.

Divine “**purpose**” is the reason for which we are created; and why we exist upon this earth. God does not just randomly react to situations, or let the laws of nature determine our destiny, but He purposefully follows a plan for His creation laid forth before the beginning of time. Philosophers have been seeking answers for our existence for ages and ages; they know no more today than ever before. However, this mystery is being unfolded and brought to light by the Church, which is the Body of Christ upon the earth.

According to the eternal purpose, it is written. Literally, this means “according to the purpose of the ages.” This includes the past ages of the Garden of Eden, the age of the patriarchs including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the age of Israel and the Old Covenant, the present age of the Church, and the coming eternal age of the Kingdom of Christ. A single purpose runs like a golden thread through all these ages, a divine goal, a great objective that will culminate in fullness of God’s eternal plan, this forethought for His Creation. For before time began, the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, agreed on a divine master plan for creation and a working towards that end. Recall our previous reading 2 Timothy that we have been called, ***according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.***” 2 Tim. 1.9

This *calling* is upon the Church and upon each and every believer, none excluded, none favored by as a man would tend to favor one over another. We, the Church, also known as the Body of Christ, are not just *saved* from eternal destruction, but are further *called* with a special calling from God, a calling towards something, something that is *according to His own purpose* devised *before time began*. The glory of this calling was previously spoken of briefly in our discussion of inheritances. So, do you understand that Divine purpose supersedes all that man can devise or purpose on his own through vain philosophies and whimsical dreams?

This present age of the Church is linked in purpose with all the past ages since the beginning of time on the one hand, and with the age to come at the return of Christ on the other hand. The Church today is the focus, it is the centerpiece, it is in one agreement with this eternal plan of God. The Church is the present-day realization of the Divine idea birthed at the beginning of time. The past ages, all of which have been in the natural or physical realm, have led up to this very moment, the age of the Church. The Church now brings forth a spiritual reality and meaning to creation, and it will culminate at the return of Christ when He comes to gather His Church together to finally fulfill God’s eternal purpose. The inheritance of man and the inheritance of God become amalgamated as one. Today, this very hour, is the age of spiritual preparation for the final age to come. It is what God achieves for Himself in and through the Church.

Our **present objective** is to search out the truth that presently lies in mysteries, hidden truths waiting and wanting to be revealed. The mystery spoken of in our Ephesians

reading is not intended to remain a mystery, to stay hidden from knowledge, but it is an understanding to be opened up and revealed. It will remain a mystery to the world which lies in darkness, but to the Church it is a fruit to eat, as from the Tree of Life

For now, we must cleanse our minds of preconceived ideas, of folk lore, of elementary teachings regarding the destiny of the Church and our eternal destiny; for the world and religions today are full of speculations made by philosophers, the educated, seers and mystics, and false prophets. Jesus Himself warned of false messiahs and prophets, Mt. 24.24-- "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." And the apostle Peter also cautioned the Church,

2 Pet. 2.1—"*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.*"

Some, with reckless abandon, plunge themselves into hearing "new things," as the scriptures would say, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*" 2 Tim. 4.3-4 But this scripture goes on to say, "*you be watchful in all things.*" Sound doctrine will have the witness of not our intellect and reasoning, nor our emotions, but will have the discernment of the Spirit.

As a further prelude to our discussion on the eternal purposes of God, I would like to briefly discuss what is at the heart of Divine purpose: relationship and fellowship.

Relationship and Fellowship

From the beginning of time two foundational life experiences have been at the heart of God for His creation. Note I have used the word "experience" in order to distinguish it from mere "knowledge." Knowledge is what we have, experience is what we do. It is practical contact with something natural or spiritual. To "know" something is one thing, to "experience" it is quite another. If you bite into an apple, you experience a delightful taste; if you stick your hand into a fire, you experience pain; if you embrace a loved one, you experience indescribable inner warmth. These are all natural experiences; they are physical and emotional. There are higher experiences that touch the soul through the spirit of man that affects him in a way in which he is never the same again. These are experiences that transform or change the soul. These experiences are that of *relationship* and *fellowship*—experiences with one another and with the Divine trinity of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In the natural we think of **relationships** in terms of father, mother, sister, brother, uncle, etc. These are the highest; these are blood relationships. We may also think of our best friend, colleague, teammate, or "brother in arms," which are significant, but not as inwardly binding as are blood relations. In terms of relationship, I will always be a father to my son and daughter, regardless of circumstances; nothing can ever

change that. A son may reject his parents, legally change his name, and never see them again. Yet, he remains their child; he will carry that status to his grave, and they to their graves as well.

Birth relationships are impossible to reverse. For believers, God will be, for all eternity our Father, for we have been born again of His Spirit of the seed of Christ. We are forever a member of the family of God. This is relationship of the highest and most glorious order. In the world today are multitudes of dysfunctional families; families in turmoil, full of independence and empathetic individuals, each looking out for their own self; families in which there is no authority, no discipline, no moral compass.

May it never be said that we as individuals, or that of the Church, is dysfunctional, everyone doing what he thinks is right in his own eyes, ignoring the Fatherhood of God and the bond of the Spirit, and the nature of the relationships we have entered into through spiritual birth. A brother or sister in the Lord is just that, a true brother or sister born of the same Spirit now joined together as one in Christ. This is a bond of relationship superseding all earthly relationships, for these are eternal, for even death cannot terminate this relationship.

Fellowship is what “we do” in our relationships. It is that close association we have with another that brings joy, contentment, and peace to the soul. This notion is rejected by the hermit, the loner, the egocentric, as well as the narcissist who know nothing of true fellowship. They are empathetic to others, seeing one’s self as the center of the universe. But from the beginning this was not in God’s holy design. There is something about *fellowship* that lifts a soul up to a higher level. John wrote about this in 1 John 1.3-4,

*“that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have **fellowship** with us; and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that our joy may be full.” 1 Jn. 1.3-4*

To have *fellowship*, or often translated *communion*, with another is to share in or have a partnership in one another’s life. It is holding things in common, not just physical things such as things we own, but personal experiences as well. The things I have in common with my wife are too numerous to mention; they not only include physical things like our home, but also includes emotional things such as our likes and dislikes, and plans and goals. It also includes spiritual things such as being one in our pursuit of God. If one is taken away, the relationship still stands but fellowship ceases, unless there is a return to communion with one another.

John writes *that you may have fellowship with us*, meaning that other believers may be “one” in faith, in worship, in prayer, in effort, in pursuit of God, in doctrine, in understanding of righteousness and holiness. It is as Jesus prayed for them, “*Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be **one** as We are.*” Jn. 17.11 Jesus was of the mindset that He always agreed with the Father because they were one, of one accord, of the same mind. There can be no divisions because “oneness” is the enemy of divisions, and divisions are the enemy of unity.

The prophet Amos writes as a word from God, *“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? Amos 3.3* If one walks contrary in opposition to the nature and values of another, he really cannot have his presence as well, for his presence will bring contention and strife. I need those in my life to challenge me, hold me accountable, and to test me and my word. These are good things. But I do not need to have in my company one in opposition to me, of a different mindset, of a different goal, having different values and sense of morality. For example, conservatives and liberals are incompatible in natural as well as in spiritual life.

John continues to write, *“and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* Something stirs within me when I contemplate this verse; it is a deep yearning of the heart, to both know and experience this holy fellowship. May I briefly speak in the first person now, for what I have to share is very personal. For what in common with Christ is set is Divine truth: that He is in me and I am in Him; because of me being “in Christ” I now have access to, and have fellowship with the Father, and that I may partake of all those blessings which God the Father has promised to those who are one in Christ Jesus, as it is written in Eph. 1.3, *“who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”*

I stand before God pardoned of my sins, I am received by Him into His fellowship; I have been born again of the seed of Christ and God is my Father; I am the temple of the Holy Ghost which is the Spirit of Christ; I am called into relationship with the Father as a son; I have been sanctified, set apart unto Him; and I am being sanctified in life every day that I live. It has been given to me to be seated with Christ in heavenly places now, and to have the spiritual reality of His presence as we gather in His name. I seek out the reality of the magnificence of His promise in 2 Pet. 1.3-4,

“His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Imagine that, *partakers of the divine nature*, something to ponder and to anticipate. And speaking of anticipation, I have the promise and expectation of being caught up with Him upon His return, raised in bodily resurrection and to find some measure or share in His reign in the fullness of His Kingdom. The more I am exalted by these thoughts the more I am reduced before Him. For now, I wait upon Him to open doors before me to walk though in service to Him, and joyfully anticipate the continued opening of His mysteries and understanding of His eternal plans and goals. This ends my personal testimony, but, I am among many, many believers having walked in the same unity of Spirit with me and with God in heavenly places. I am the voice of many seeking such fellowship with our Father and Lord Jesus Christ.

This, brothers and sisters in Christ, is our hope, our expectation, our upward calling, our heavenly pursuit; to have true fellowship with those in the Church, the Body of

Christ, and that our fellowship may be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ—that our joy may be full.

The next time you are gathered together for the breaking of bread, otherwise known as communion, think on the spiritual reality of this special fellowship we have with one another and with God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ. Look past the physical elements and rituals, for they mean nothing but only exist as a physical shadow of a spiritual reality. Jesus said that, *“unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”* Jn. 6.53-54. This is not a saying everyone may receive. To the unbeliever it is nonsense and to the religious it is a holy ritual to perform. But to the spiritually minded it means that, by our intimate and inseparable oneness with Christ, all that has been purchased by the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood we now have and are continuing to enter into its fullest. As scriptures would say, *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”* Lk. 8.8

Next time we will catch a glimpse of God’s eternal purpose.

S1.E3. Relationship and Fellowship: Questions for Discussion

1. Explain and make a clear distinction between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.
2. It was stated that all past ages (Garden of Eden, Age of the Patriarchs, and Israel) are all physical ages whereas the age of the Church is spiritual. Explain the significance of this statement.
3. Explain the difference between relationship and fellowship using both natural and spiritual examples.
4. Why is it dangerous for a believer to prefer to remain isolated from the Body of Christ and seek God the way he wants to?
5. What are your thoughts on John writing, *“and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* 1 Jn. 1.3