

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life from the week ending 8/08/04
New England Bible Conference 2004
Your Personal Sense of Destiny.
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11**

Our **personal sense of destiny** answers vital questions such as: “*Why you have been created and placed on this earth?*” or, “*Why does God leave us on earth after our salvation?*” In discovering our destiny, our motivation is crucial; we must learn how to see life from the divine viewpoint, **Isa 55:8-9**. We begin with a simplistic assertion—through understanding your personal sense of destiny, you will know God’s purpose, and you will understand how all the pieces of your life fit together, **Rom 8:28-31**.

God knew what He was doing from beginning, and He decided how to shape the lives of those who would believe on Jesus Christ. If you believe that God has a plan and purpose for your life, this divine perspective will reduce stress in your life, clarify your decisions, increase your contentment, and prepare you for eternity. The doctrine of election teaches *equal privilege* and *equal opportunity* for all. You have the same opportunity as everyone else to advance to spiritual maturity and glorify God in your personal sense of destiny. If you have the right priorities, you will have freedom, **Joh 8:32**. If you have the wrong priorities you will have a life of bondage, as in **Rom 7:24**.

Everything above and below, visible and invisible, begins with God, and finds its purpose in Him, **Col 1:16-17**. You have been created for Him. Your personal sense of destiny is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, **Luk 14:26-27**, **Joh 1:13**, **Isa 43:7**, **Rev 4:11**. The search for the purpose of life has perplexed humanity for thousands of years because we begin at the wrong starting point—ourselves! Focusing on ourselves will never reveal our true purpose, **Rom 7:18**. You did not create yourself, so how can you tell yourself what you were created for? You were made *by* God and *for* God, and until we understand this, life will never make sense, **Isa 45:12**. It is only “in God” that we discover our true origin, identity, meaning, and significance; every other path is a dead end. God has assigned to you a number of days to live on this earth, **Psa 90:12**, **31:15**. God has given us an assignment, and He has also given us a certain amount of time to fulfill this destiny.

King Solomon wrote in **Ecc 3:1-8**, “***There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven. A time to give birth, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot what is planted. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build up. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. A time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing. A time to search, and a time to give up as lost; a time to keep, and a time to throw away. A time to tear apart, and a time to sew together; a time to be silent, and a time to speak. A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils?***”

Without understanding God's divine purpose, we will conclude as Solomon did, that there is no profit in our work.

The concept of time is so interwoven into our daily lives... "What time is it?" "I don't have time." "How much time will it take?" "Don't waste your time on that!" God gives you a certain amount of *time*, that you might use it for His glory, **Eph 5:16**. Every day we live is a gracious gift from God, and each day we must have time set aside for our relationship with Him. The only time we have to honor God is the number of days He has given us in the Christian life, **Psa 90:12, Jam 4:13-15**. The fact that even the unbeliever lives another day reveals the faithfulness of God, **Lam 3:22-23**. We need Bible doctrine daily, **Job 23:12**. If we do not "purchase" time by taking in doctrine consistently, we actually lose days, through divine discipline, **Psa 102:23**. Therefore, we are told to buy back the time in **Eph 5:16-17**. Time is precious. It is irretrievable. You can never get back the time you wasted; it is gone forever. The greatest use of one's life is to spend it on something that will outlast it. God's timing is perfect and if you are in fellowship with Him, you will have peace of mind with everything you do.

God has given us an assignment, namely to fulfill our personal sense of destiny, and God has also give us a certain amount of time to fulfill this destiny. After wasting most of his life, Solomon asks in **Ecc 3:9**, "*What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils?*" The word "toils" is the Hebrew *amel*, meaning monotonous and wearisome labor or work. It connotes doing the same thing again and again until you are sick of it, and tired and exhausted. It describes an individual whose life is boring and tiresome, with no meaning, purpose, or definition.

1. Understanding your personal sense of destiny means to appreciate time as a gracious gift from the Lord, **Psa 90:12**.
2. Our attitude toward time should be respect (not cynicism), **Eph 5:14**.
3. Life has no meaning, purpose, or definition if we mock the details of life and ignore our personal sense of destiny.
4. Without an understanding of our personal sense of destiny, time becomes a form of slavery and bondage, from which there is no escape but death.
5. Bondage to time means no capacity for life, love, and happiness.
6. Your personal sense of destiny is a provision from God, not a problem to be ignored.
7. For the believer who understands his personal sense of destiny, the most insignificant of tasks becomes a place of service to the Lord, **Luk 19:17**.
8. There is no such thing as a monotonous job, only monotonous people!

Solomon continues in **Ecc 3:10**, "*I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.*" Solomon has been wasting time in reversionism, and neglecting doctrine now will catch up with you in the future. Solomon arrives at a conclusion in **Ecc 3:11a**, "*He has made everything appropriate in its time.*" Our problem is not so much what happens, but our perspective after it happens. When something occurs that we did not want, we ask, "What kind of God would allow this to happen?" What we miss is our part in the angelic conflict and the fulfillment of our personal sense of destiny.

Solomon continues with a second conclusion in **Ecc 3:11b**, "*He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.*" God has placed a deep yearning in man for that which is eternal, as we see in David in **Psa 42:1**. It is a delicate and sensitive desire that

can be snuffed out by hardness of the heart. However, the more this desire is fed, the stronger it becomes. This desire for the eternal means that every member of the human race has a divine destination for their life desired by God, **2Pe 3:9**, **1Ti 2:4**. The idea that mankind can find happiness apart from God is vain and futile. Most people never really live, but are always hoping to really live some day. Many people try to use God for their own self-purpose, but this is doomed to failure. You were made for God, not *vice versa*, and life is about letting God use you for His purposes, **Joh 3:30**.

The easiest way to discover the purpose of an invention is to ask its creator. The same is true for discovering the purpose of life—ask God! God has not left us in the dark to wonder about the true meaning of life. He has clearly revealed His purposes for our lives through the Bible. The Bible is our Owner’s Manual, explaining why we are alive, how life works, what to avoid, and what to expect in the future. God is not just the starting point of your life; He is the source of it. It is in Christ that we discover who we are and what we are living for, **Act 17:28**, **Col 1:16-18**, **2:9-13**. Long before we first heard of the Lord Jesus Christ, He had His eye on us. He designed us for glory, and He is working out that which He has placed within us, **Phi 1:6**. If you pray for strength that you might achieve, He may make you weak that you might obey. If you pray for health that you might do great things, He may give you afflictions that you might do even greater things. You are who you are for a reason, and you are part of an intricate plan, **Isa 44:2**.

Solomon said in **Ecc 4:4**, “*And I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.*” Solomon observed that the basic motive for success is the driving force of envy and jealousy. Everyone’s life is driven by something. Most dictionaries define the verb “drive” as “to guide, to control, or to direct.” What is the driving force in your life? Right now you may be driven by a problem, a pressure, or a deadline. You may be driven by a painful memory, a haunting fear, or a spiritual conviction. There are thousands of circumstances and emotions that can drive your life.

- 1. Guilt.** People spend their entire lives running from regrets and hiding their shame, trying to please others. Trying to please people can destroy your relationship with God, **Joh 12:43**. Guilt-driven people are usually manipulated by memories, allowing their past to control their future. Guilt *separates* a person from God. Guilty people unconsciously punish themselves.
 - a.** Parents use guilt as a method of manipulating their children, rather than legitimate discipline and correction.
 - b.** Satan accuses God’s people to bring guilt upon them, **Rev 12:10**.
 - c.** Sin can make one feel so guilty that he hides from God, **Gen 3:7-10**.
 - d.** Being too concerned about what others say produces guilt, **Joh 12:42-43**.
 - e.** Receiving something you did not earn can produce guilt; many people have difficulty accepting gifts.
 - f.** Guilty people are often unable to say “no,” and will do anything that anyone asks them.
 - g.** People experience guilt due to feelings of inadequacy or an inferiority complex, **2Co 10:12**.
 - h.** Many people cannot accept their own weaknesses, **2Co 10:12**.
 - i.** It is possible to experience guilt, not only from the evil that we do, but also from the good we neglect to do, **Jam 4:17**. When Cain sinned, his guilt severed him

from God's presence, and God said, "*You will be a restless wanderer on the earth,*" **Gen 4:12**.

This describes most people today—wandering through life without a purpose. We are products of our past, but we do not have to be its prisoners. God's purpose is not limited by your past; He turned a murderer named Moses into a leader and a coward named Gideon into a courageous hero, and He can do amazing things with the rest of your life as well. God specializes in giving people a fresh start. God holds nothing against you, and there is happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven, **Psa 32:1**. There is relief for those who have confessed their sins, **Pro 28:13**.

- 2. Resentment and anger.** Instead of releasing their pain through forgiveness, people rehearse it over and over again in their minds. They are always thinking about the negative, in contrast to **Phi 4:8**. Those who have hurt you in the past cannot continue to hurt you now, unless you hold on to the pain through resentment.
- 3. Fear.** Fears may be a result of a traumatic experience, unrealistic expectations, or even genetic predisposition. Regardless of the cause, fear-driven people often miss great opportunities because they are afraid to take risks. Fear is a self-imposed prison, **1Jo 4:18**.
- 4. Materialism.** The desire to acquire "stuff" can become the goal of one's life as he ignores his personal sense of destiny. This drive to always want more is based on the misconceptions that possessions will make us more happy and secure, as illustrated in the popular parable of the **prodigal son** in **Luk 15**.

The prodigal son is at home, but he is dissatisfied because he does not understand his personal sense of destiny. The father in this parable represents God the Father, and his two sons represent believers; this is a doctrinal message for born-again believers. We read in **Luk 15:12**, "*And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me. And he divided his wealth between them.'*" The prodigal son accepted the blessings of the Father (as all men do who live on God's earth), while turning his back on his Father (as men do when they reject fellowship with God), and the Father made no attempt to stop him. It was the son who walked away from the Father, *not* the Father from the son. We draw away from God; He does not draw away from us.

In **Luk 15:14-20a**, "*Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need.*" [This is divine discipline, which God brings on every one of His children who goes astray from his personal sense of destiny.] *And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* [This is the depths to which the prodigal son had sunk.] *And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.* [This is a picture of what happens when a believer goes back to the lifestyle from which God has rescued him.] *But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my Father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my Father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight [rebound]; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'* And he got up and came to his Father."

God knows every heartache and every difficulty we will ever face. With our Father, the only issue is coming back home, **Luk 15:20b-23**, "*But while he was still a long way off, his Father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced*

him, and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired men.' But the Father said to his slaves, *'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry.'*” This is what happens in rebound—forgiveness of guilt, and restoration to fellowship with God. This is the divine attitude of grace. Rather than punishing the son for his sins, the father has a party.

Knowing your personal sense of destiny (1) gives meaning to your life, (2) gives you hope and a good future (**Jer 29:11**), (3) simplifies your life, (4) focuses your life and concentrates your energy on what is important (you become effective by being selective), and (5) prepares you for eternity.

Many people spend their lives trying to create a lasting legacy on earth. However, all achievements are eventually surpassed, records are broken, reputations fade, and tributes are forgotten. You were put on earth to prepare for eternity, **2Co 5:4-8**. One day you will stand before God, and we can surmise that God will ask us two crucial questions—“What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ?” and “What did you do with what I gave you?” Death is not your termination, but your transition into eternity, and there are eternal consequences to what you do on earth.

When you live in light of eternity, your values radically change. God has given us glimpses of eternity in His Word, and we know that right now God is preparing an eternal home for us. In heaven, we will be reunited with loved ones, released from all pain and suffering, rewarded for our faithfulness on earth, and reassigned to do work that we will love. We will enjoy unbroken fellowship with God, and He will enjoy us for an unlimited, endless forever. One day the Lord Jesus Christ will say, *“Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world,”* **Mat 25:34**.

God has a personal sense of destiny for your life on earth, but it does not end here. His plan involves far more than the few decades you will spend on this planet. It is more than “the opportunity of a lifetime.” God offers you an opportunity *beyond* your lifetime. God’s plans endure forever; His personal sense of destiny for your life will last for all eternity.

Life on earth is a test. This life metaphor is seen in stories throughout the Bible. God continually tests people’s character, faith, obedience, love, integrity, and loyalty, **2Co 13:5**. Words like trials, temptations, refining, and testing occur more than 200 times in the Bible. Character is developed and revealed by tests, and we are always being tested. God constantly watches your response to people, problems, success, conflicts, illness, disappointments, etc. Your ultimate test concerning your personal sense of destiny will occur at the judgment seat of Christ, **1Co 3:13**.

You will be tested by major changes, delayed promises, impossible problems, undeserved criticism, and senseless tragedies. When you understand that life is a test, you realize that nothing is insignificant in your life. Even the smallest incident has significance for your character development. Every day is an important day, and every second is a growth opportunity to deepen your character, to demonstrate love, or to depend on God. God never allows the tests you face to be greater than the grace He gives you to handle them, **1Co 10:13**. Some tests seem overwhelming, while others you may not even notice. However, they all have eternal implications.

The Lord leaves us on earth to fulfill a personal sense of destiny designed by Him. Once you are saved, God intends to use you for His purpose and desires, because you belong to Him. A “non-serving Christian” is a contradiction in terms. Each of us has a role to play, **1Co 12:27**, and every role is important; there is no small service to God. Some are visible and some are behind the scenes, but all are valuable. “Small” or “hidden” ministries often make the greatest difference. Jesus Christ came to *serve* and to *give*. And these two words should define our life on earth.

For a more detailed study, order tapes 1907 to 1915.