

Week 6: Rooted in Calling – Living for More Than a Paycheck

Scripture References: Jeremiah 29:4–7; Genesis 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12; Colossians 1:10

Focus: God created each of us with purpose. This session helps participants discover the connection between their identity in Christ and the calling to serve, influence, and make a kingdom impact—wherever they are.

Opening Prayer: "God, thank You for giving us purpose in every area of life. Show us what it means to live with calling, even in the ordinary. Amen."

Icebreaker: "What did you want to be when you were a kid—and why?"

Read: Jeremiah 29:4-7

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Summary: A calling isn't limited to ministry roles. Every Christian is called to live fruitfully wherever God has placed them. Whether it's your job, your home, or your school—God has purpose for you there.

God tells the exiles in Babylon to build lives of purpose right where they are—not to withdraw or wait. We're called to be ambassadors of God's kingdom wherever we've been placed—even in hard or unexpected places.

Illustration:

Bloom where you're planted. Like missionaries in a foreign land, believers represent God by doing good and seeking peace where they are.

Recent Statistic: 70% of workers desire meaningful work (McKinsey, 2022).

Discussion Questions:

- Why would God tell His people to "settle in" during exile?
- What might "seeking the welfare of the city" look like for you?
- How can your work or neighborhood be a platform for your calling?

Read: Genesis 1:28

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

From the beginning, God created humans with purpose—to be fruitful, fill the earth, and steward creation. This includes not just having children but multiplying goodness, creativity, and flourishing through our work.

Illustration:

Think of a gardener—called to cultivate and bring life. Whether we're planting ideas, businesses, families, or ministries, we reflect the Creator.

Discussion Questions:

- What does "being fruitful" look like beyond having children?
- How can you bring life and order to the spaces God has given you
- How does this change the way you view your daily work?

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹² so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Paul exhorts the Church to live quietly, mind their business, and work diligently. This kind of lifestyle earns respect and reflects Christ. Ordinary faithfulness in work and relationships is one of the most powerful testimonies.

Illustration:

In a noisy world of platform and influence, God often moves through steady, faithful presence.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Paul values a "quiet life"?
- What's the connection between work and Christian witness?
- How can we honor God with the jobs or responsibilities we currently have?

Read: Colossians 1:10

so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

Paul's prayer is for believers to live lives fully pleasing to God—bearing fruit, growing in knowledge, and walking in a manner worthy of their calling. Every Christian has a divine assignment, and calling is not just for pastors or missionaries.

Illustration:

Think of a name badge or jersey—you represent Christ in every environment. Our calling is to make Him known wherever we go.

Discussion Questions:

- What differentiates a Christian from a non-Christian in the workplace?
- What would it look like to “walk worthy” of the Lord in your current season of life?

Potential Additional Discussion Questions:

- What do you enjoy most about work? And what do you struggle with most at work?
- How would seeing everything you do as a mission change your perspective? (Attitude, approach, motivation, focus, etc.)
- How does Jeremiah 29 apply today?
- How does God use ordinary work?
- Do you think God the Father was less pleased with Jesus during His 30 years of preparation (growing up doing carpentry work) than His three years of public ministry? Explain.
- How are your gifts used in your work?
- What does a faithful worker look like?
- Who in your workplace needs Jesus?
- What might God be doing through your work?
- What support would help you live your calling?
- How can we pray for each other's work?

Colossians 1:9-10 Commentary

1:9–10 When God wanted to explain what knowing Him would produce in the lives of Christians, He used the word *fruit*. Fruit has three characteristics: it is visible; it reflects the nature of the tree it grows on; and it exists for someone else's benefit. God is concerned that what we produce is in keeping with Who He is—that the products of our lives are consistent with our biblically grounded experience with Him. Sometimes, though, when we look over our lives, we'll see rotten fruit. That should concern us, too.

Paul never stopped praying for the spiritual growth of the Church in Colossae (1:9). He connects bearing good fruit with the knowledge of God (1:10). This is experiential knowledge, not just informational. When Adam *knew* Eve, she conceived; that intimacy produced fruit. Paul asks the Lord that the Colossians would have the wisdom to make biblically based decisions that come from knowing God's will (1:9). Then he prays that the walk of their Christian life (how they live) would result in every good work (1:10). The product of all of this is *fruitfulness*, having a

useful Christian life that positively affects the lives of others. Based on our experience with Him, God produces something in our life that is beautiful, enjoyable, and useful.

Most of us want to bear good fruit. The problem is that though many Christians hear about God and carry His Book around, they're not really getting to know Him, not really experiencing Him. To bear fruit, which is contributing to the development of Christ-like character in the discipleship of others, we need to be grafted into "the true vine" (Christ), to be lifted up out of the dirt, to set aside our diversions, and to "remain" in Christ (John 15:1–8). You don't just visit God for two hours on Sunday; you talk to Him all the time, threading the discussion through all your activities. While you're walking or while you're driving, "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do" (1 Corinthians 10:31), stay plugged in. You don't need a *microwave* experience with God; you need a *crockpot* experience with Him. Simmer in His presence and impact the lives of others with the impact the Lord has on you.

Jeremiah 29:4-7 Commentary

29:4 The first thing the exiles needed to learn was that the Babylonians were not to blame for their captivity. In the grand scheme of things, *God* had deported them to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was merely the instrument God used to punish them for their sins. God's message through Jeremiah here was essentially this: "You're in this mess because I sent you there. And I sent you there because you forgot Me." It was their failure to be God's distinct people who worshiped Him alone that caused God to judge them.

29:5–6 God's agenda for the exiles covered everything from their employment to building their families. Hananiah had led the people to believe they would return home soon (28:11), as if they didn't need to do anything. But God told them, build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce. Find wives for yourselves and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters to men in marriage so that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there, do not decrease.

As it was with the Babylonian exiles, so it is with Christians today. We need to prepare to do life because we might be here for a while. God wanted His people to establish a kingdom presence in exile. Building houses and planting gardens suggests ownership, a key element of a kingdom economic strategy. And ownership always requires some sort of investment. God told the exiles that while they were waiting for a better *tomorrow*, they were to be industrious *today*.

The exiles of Judah needed to understand that the Babylonians were not their problem; God was. And if God is your problem, then God is your only solution. It doesn't matter whom we elect or what programs we start if we lose our spiritual perspective. We must see that God put us here for a reason. Earth is not merely a place to wait for a ride to Heaven. It's where we live out God's Kingdom agenda in history.

29:7–9 Pursue the well-being of the city I have deported you to. Pray to the *LORD* on its behalf, for when it thrives, you will thrive implies that God didn't want the Jews to build walls around their homes and create a Jewish subculture within Babylon to shield themselves from the pagans. One reason the wheels are coming off our culture morally, is that for too many years, Christians have secluded themselves within their churches. We have abandoned the culture to Satan. But God's message is to pursue the good of the culture in which we live—not necessarily the so-called

good that the culture wants but the good it needs. We are to pursue the social and spiritual wellbeing of the community where we live, work, and raise families, which will result in improved lives for us.

Genesis 1:26-30 Commentary

1:26–30 The end of day six breaks the pattern. Until this point, God had simply spoken and the created world sprang into being. But here God demonstrated His creative genius with His crowning achievement: Let Us make man in Our image, visibly mirroring God’s spiritual nature, according to Our likeness, visibly mirroring God’s functional actions (1:26). “Let Us” is a hint at the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit agreed together to make the first human family, and that family was supposed to reflect truths about God. Like the Trinity, humanity has unity in diversity. God ... created him [that is, humans] in the image of God (1:27), so every human reflects the unity of God. But He also created them male and female (1:27), so our differences reflect the diversity of the Trinity too, since we were designed to mirror the Creator. This also lays the groundwork for upholding the importance of heterosexual marriage as the foundation of the family in fulfilling God’s kingdom agenda in history.

God created man with a threefold purpose in history: to represent God’s person and image, to rule on God’s behalf, and to reproduce God’s presence throughout the earth. These purposes are accomplished when His people maintain fellowship with Him and submit to His will, as He governs the world in which He has placed us.

The more we image-bearers reproduce and fill the earth, the more His image goes out. Just as God handed over responsibility to the sun, so that it would shine *for God*, God handed over responsibility to us, so that we would govern and rule and steward His world *for Him*. This is God’s world, but He’s put it in our hands and said, “Let them rule.”

Notably, God’s promise of blessing followed man’s fulfillment of this dominion mandate. Thus, failure to do so robs mankind of the experience of God’s favor. We must also note that while man was given the authority to rule over creation, that didn’t include ruling over other people.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 Commentary

4:11 Evidently, some of the Thessalonians had gotten so excited about Jesus’s return that they had quit their jobs. But Paul reminds them to work with [their] own hands, because their laziness had become a liability to their friends and neighbors. Waiting expectantly for Jesus’s return does not mean that we stop working and sit around doing nothing, wasting time until the rapture. It means we work *differently*, looking to Jesus (and not our work) for our hope.

Closing Challenge: Write down one way you can serve others through your work this week and do it with joy.

Closing Prayer: "Jesus, thank You for giving us purpose beyond a paycheck. Help us to work as unto You and bring light to the places You’ve sent us. Amen."

