

Lift Ticket
5 week challenge
Week 1: Gravity

Day 1

Devotional Thought:

I have a terrible sense of direction. I get lost in what should be the most familiar places. I lived in the same town for 15 years and regularly found myself lost, making wrong turns, and ending up in places I didn't intend to end up. I'm lost so often it doesn't surprise me at all any more when I get lost. It doesn't surprise the people who know me very well either. I've often tried to figure out why it is that I get lost so often. Is it that the road system is not adequately constructed? Does my vehicle not take me to the places it should? Are maps and road signs not correct? The answer to all of these is no. The problem is I don't pay attention. When I'm driving, I'm usually so distracted by what I'm thinking about, the song on the radio, the text message I'm trying to send, or the email I'm reading that I just flat out miss my turn. All the systems that I need to reach my destination are in place. I have a vehicle, there are roads, there are road signs, mile markers etc... everything I need to figure it out is accessible to me. Yet I still get lost! Then when I'm lost I tend to blame it on someone else, anyone else. I think "discovering God's will" for our lives is much the same way. God has equipped us with everything we need to make wise decisions. He isn't hiding His will from us. There aren't secret shortcuts that He is withholding from us. God has revealed His will pretty plainly through His sovereign will and moral will. He has even given us the proper filters for discerning His personal will for our lives. The problem is I don't pay attention. Or I don't use the resources He has given and then I end up feeling lost. Then the amazing part is, I blame God for my being lost. I accuse Him of hiding His will from me.

If we really have an honest sincere desire to follow God in our lives, then we should probably start asking new questions. Our questions are often very centered on our circumstances, our desires, our assumptions about how life works best. Often in life, it seems that we arrive at the wrong conclusions because of false assumptions. Or another way to put it would be that we get the wrong answers because we ask the wrong questions.

Old Question- "What does God want me to do?"

- What kind of life does this question lead to?

New Question- "What is God doing? How does He want to use me to accomplish His purpose?"

- What kind of life does this question lead to?

Verse to Remember- Deuteronomy 6:5

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength

Day 2

Devotional Thought:

Have you ever flown over the ocean? Depending on your feelings about flying and water in general this is either a terrifying experience or really cool. One of the things that always impacts me when I fly over the ocean is how big it is. It can be overwhelming. But the truth is what I'm looking at is not the ocean, it's just the surface of the ocean. Most of the ocean is beyond what I can see from above it. There is immense depth to the ocean, millions of formations and life forms, almost an entire other world exists beneath the surface. Now if my son or daughter were to look out the window of a plane and ask what they were looking at I would most definitely tell them "the ocean". That would be true. It's the same thing with worship. We in the church world often narrowly define worship as the time that we sing songs in a church building. We don't mean to exclude the rest of what worship is, but that's often what we do. The truth is singing songs in a church building is meant to be just the surface of the depth of true worship. Worship is so much more. In Biblical terms, worship is something we do with our whole life. I think worship is best defined as "our response to who God is and what He has done and is doing". Which means worship doesn't fit neatly into our categories and boxes, because we can respond in so many different ways. Sometimes our response may be to sing songs to God as David often did in the Bible, most prevalent in the book of Psalms. Often our worship takes the form of how we interact with others. How we do our jobs, study, play, and rest all fit into the immense ocean that is worship.

Old Question: How can I carve out more time to worship God?

- In what ways does this question box worship in?

New Question: How can I worship God with my time?

- In what ways does this question tap into the depth of what worship is?

Verse to Remember- Colossians 3:23

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men

Day 3

Devotional Thought:

Sometimes when my family and I pull into the driveway on a clear night when the stars are all out, I'll pick up my daughter and go stand in the driveway. I'll hold her and she will lean back as far as she can and we will look up together. Or when it's time for sunset, we will walk around the corner so we can see the sun go down behind mountains. Then we will often just watch as the sun reflects its last rays of light onto the clouds. My daughter always says, "Look how God painted the sky for us, daddy." Personally, I don't see how it's possible for any of us as humans to look up at such creativity and not be overwhelmed with a sense of a Creator. I think that's why everyone worships. Everyone. We all dedicate our lives, our decisions to what we believe to be the ultimate thing, idea, system, or person. Even an Atheist is a worshipper, because an atheist responds to what he or she perceives as the truth. Ingrained deep within every human being on this planet is the gravitational pull to give our affections, our very lives over to something or someone. Is that just insecurity and an inability to deal with the cold hard truth that we are an accident and there is no creator, there is no purpose, and there is no truth? Or is it evidence that we are not an accident, there is a creator and there is purpose and truth? Paul certainly believed the latter. As we talked about last weekend, when he walked around Athens (Acts 17) he observed a very religious culture. If you notice Paul doesn't contend with them that they shouldn't worship, he just informs them of the proper place to direct their worship. The one true God, the creator of heaven and earth. I think I'm in desperate need of always evaluating the direction of my worship. Because it's only in God that I'm ultimately satisfied. It's only in Him that I find purpose. After all it's Him that created me.

Old Question: Is there something or someone worth worshipping?

- What does this question reveal about what we believe to be true?

New Question: Is who/what I'm worshipping worthy?

- What assumption does this question make?

Verse to Remember: Acts 17:28

'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

Day 4

Devotional Thought:

I believe many of us often times find ourselves suffering from what I like to call, “circumstantially induced amnesia”. Meaning in light of what is currently happening to me, I forget everything else that has ever happened to me. This can work in the positive and in the negative sense. When things are going well in my life, I tend to forget that the pattern of my life has been that the good times are temporary and will be interrupted by bad times. Conversely when things are going bad in my life, I tend to forget that the pattern of my life has been that the bad times are temporary and will be interrupted by good times. In other words, what’s happening to me right now is what I’m most focused on. This tends to affect my willingness to celebrate who God is and what He has done. That’s why I wish the words of Matt Redmen’s song “Blessed be your name” were truer of my life.

“Blessed be your name
when the sun’s shining down on me
when the world’s all as it should be
blessed be your name”

The truth is when the conditions of my life are like that I have a tendency to forget about God. I disregard Him altogether because I don’t feel any need for Him at the moment, because after all things are going well.

But the song moves on.

“Blessed be your name
when I’m found in the desert place
on the road marked with suffering
blessed be your name.”

The truth is when the conditions of my life are like that I have a tendency to blame God. I point a finger and demand an explanation. I have a need that as far as I can tell is not being met and God needs to change that.

I would love to grow to a place where my tendency is to lean on God in the good times and in the hard times. Because after all, in the word’s of one of Jesus’ most famous followers, “where else am I gonna go” (my paraphrase)?

Old Question: God, why are you allowing this to happen to me?

- Even if God answered this question would that satisfy us?

New Question: God, how are you trying to draw me to you through my current circumstances (good or bad?)

- What effect would asking this question have on our lives?

Verse to Remember: Job 1:21b

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.

Day 5

Devotional Thought:

For whatever reason, for the longest time I always believed that God's had this desire to make me conform to a boring life. In some ways, it was because I thought church was boring, so if church is boring God must be as well. I thought Christians were boring and all looked the same, so God must be boring. Two things have changed my perception in a dramatic way. The first thing that changed my perspective was reading the Bible. It seemed that everyone I came across in the Bible was being pulled into anything and everything that wasn't boring. People who were told to build boats in the middle of deserts, told to confront armies of thousands with hundreds, led to do battle with giants, walk on water, travel to the ends of the earth, etc. Not only were these not boring people in the Bible, God is anything, but boring in the Bible. He's unpredictable, emotional, spectacular, angry, kind, glorious, and funny; I could keep going because God is infinite and indescribable. Suffice it to say, the God of the Bible is not some safe character you can fit into a category. So it would be outside of the character of God to call His own people to boring, mundane, uninspired lives without much purpose beyond going to church and obeying the rules, which brings me to my own experience with God. My life is just like everyone else's life on this planet in that there are certainly moments that feel boring, uninspired, mundane. Not every moment of my life is filled with excitement. But as I reflect on my life since I handed it over to God there is no question that He has taken me places I would never have dreamed, to do things I never dreamed I could do. I've been to places like Haiti to help take care of orphans. I've been to war torn Northern Ireland to help bring reconciliation and relevant ministry in the name of Jesus. I've been to the inner-city and taught the Bible, I've worked with thousands of students over the past 10 years trying to introduce them to the same amazing, not boring God that has changed my life. I find myself in Colorado (one of the coolest places to live in this country for sure!) at a church like none I've ever seen before much less been a part of. What I've found is that this world's operating system moves me toward conformity. The fads, traditions, and pressures of the culture, I find, are tools used to shape me into an image of everyone else around me. Yet, God's agenda isn't for me to conform. His agenda is for me to be transformed. God wants me to embrace my own uniqueness. His desire for me is to be exactly who He created me to be and to do exactly what He created me to do, not what anything or anyone else tries to pigeon hole me into. Because of that and many, many other truths, He is worth giving my life to.

All that to say, my original assumptions about God and His desires for my life were wrong. The truth is God doesn't reserve purpose, ministry, serving others, and mission for pastors and people who work at churches. He calls us all into what Jesus calls "life to the full." This means squeezing every drop of purpose out of this life He has given us. Every one of us is invited to that table!

Old Question: If I followed God, what would He make me do?

- What does this assume about who God is and what he desires for us?

New Question: If I followed God, where would He take me?

- What does this assume about who God is and what He desires for us?

Verse to Remember: Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you

will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.