

YOU WERE SAVED TO SERVE

2 Peter 1:1

By Andy Manning

What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of life? Why are you here?

The dominant philosophy of our time is called existentialism.

It really became popular in the middle of the twentieth century and was heavily influential in the sixties, especially the writing of the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre.

Existentialism says that there is no objective, universal purpose to the universe or to your life. There are no objective morals or values.

But you can live a meaningful life. How?

First, recognize that there is no objective meaning and purpose and morality.

Second, do not let others tell you how to live; do not follow the path laid out by others; to do that was called by some “bad faith.”

Third, define your own meaning and purpose and morality, and live by your own code.

Since there is no objective meaning and morality, then there is no wrong path. The only way you can go wrong is by following others.

Existentialism says not only are you the captain of your own ship, but you must steer your own ship. Don't follow. Don't copy. Make your own way. You be you.

But the Bible tells us something far different.

The Bible says that God created you, and He created you for a very specific purpose and plan.

And the key to living a full and meaningful life is to discover God's plan for your life and then live according to that plan.

Turn with me to **2 Peter 1:1**. Today we're starting a new sermon series through 2 Peter. Let's look at verse 1.

Simeon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ:

To those who have received a faith equal to ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Today I just want to focus on Peter's first words.

He starts out with his name, Simeon Peter, and then he states his purpose – a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Peter understood what most people don't. He understood His purpose – to serve Jesus Christ.

And that's your purpose too. **The purpose and meaning of your life is to be a servant of Jesus Christ.**

Most people misunderstand their purpose.

Some people make it their purpose to get rich, or famous. Some people make it their purpose in life to have fun – maybe to hunt and fish, or to travel. Some make it their purpose to build a successful company that they can pass on to their kids. Some people make it their purpose to retire early so that they can kick back and relax for that last fifty years of their life. Some people make their purpose to support a sports team. Some people make it their purpose in life to collect something. Some people make it their purpose to clean up the environment, or to save an endangered

species, or to put an end to some injustice, such as abortion, or to help the poor, and hungry, and homeless.

But the truth is that none of these purposes are correct.

Each and every person on this earth has the same purpose – to serve Jesus Christ.

It is okay to get rich and famous, to have fun, to build a successful company, to retire early, or to clean up the environment.

But those aren't your primary purpose.

And if you devote your life to the wrong purpose, then you will waste your life, and you will not find ultimate fulfillment.

Your ultimate purpose is to serve Jesus Christ.

Notice that I did not say that your purpose is to serve.

Today many people value service.

Give yourself away to some cause. Live for something bigger than yourself.

But your purpose in life is not just to serve. And it is not just to serve others. Your purpose is to serve Jesus.

Serving Jesus will mean serving others, but if your primary purpose is not to serve Jesus, then you will not be able to effectively serve others. Only by serving Jesus do we know how to effectively serve others.

And the apostle **Peter understood this.**

Before He became a servant of Jesus, Peter was a fisherman. And one day Jesus told Peter, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Immediately Peter left his profession and devoted his life to serving Jesus (Mt 4:18-20).

Did Peter make a good decision? Absolutely.

What are the benefits of serving Jesus?

1. Serving Jesus gives your life significance.

If Peter wouldn't have left his nets to serve Jesus, he would have spent the rest of his life as a fisherman. And there's nothing wrong with being a fisherman if that is what God's plan is for you. But God had something different in mind for Peter.

Because Peter chose to serve Jesus, he was able to make a difference with his life. He was able to do something really important with his life; something that really mattered.

Peter went on to become the leader of the early church.

He was the first human being to confess that Jesus Christ was the Son of God (Mt 16:15-16).

On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the early church, Peter preached a sermon that saw about 3,000 converts (Acts 2:14, 41).

He went on to be the first to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

He went on to write two books in the Bible, and maybe three, because many scholars believe that he was Mark's source for the Gospel of Mark.

Because Peter chose to serve Jesus, his example and his words and his life has impact millions of people throughout history.

Serving Jesus gives your life significance. It enables to make your life count; to live a life that really matters; that makes a difference; that is really important.

Wouldn't you like to reach the end of your life and say, "My life was significant; it was important; I did something that truly mattered; something that truly made a difference"?

We all want that. And that's what you get when you choose to serve Jesus with your life. He will add significance to your life. He will make sure that you don't waste your life.

2. Serving Jesus gives your life fulfillment.

Again, there's nothing wrong with being a fisherman, but think of all the things that Peter got to see and experience because he chose to serve Jesus.

He spent every waking moment with the Son of God for three years.

He saw Jesus perform countless miracles – exorcisms, healings, even raising the dead to life.

He saw Jesus feed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish.

He saw Jesus walk on the water, and then joined Him.

Peter was one of only three people who witnessed the transfiguration up on the mountain, when Jesus' appearance was changed and His true glory was revealed.

Peter was there for the last supper;

he was there when Jesus was arrested;

he was there for the crucifixion.

Peter saw the risen Christ with his own eyes.

He witnessed the ascension.

He was there on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and the appearance like tongues of fire resting on each person, and each of them were given the ability to speak in other languages.

Because Peter chose to serve Jesus with his life, he got to experience so many amazing things. He got to see and do things and go to places that he would have never dreamed possible.

Serving Jesus gives your life fulfillment.

We tend to think that if we give our lives to Christ then we will miss out on the fun of life, but the opposite is true.

Christ has so many amazing things for you to see and experience that are so much greater than you could ever imagine, but you only get the fulfillment that Jesus offers if you choose to serve Him with your life.

3. Serving Jesus gives your life power.

Because Peter chose to serve Jesus with his life, He was able to do the impossible. He was able to do things that were far beyond anything he could do on His own.

He was used by God to heal the sick.

On two recorded occasions he healed crippled men so that they could walk again.

He had so much healing power that people would lay the sick in the street on beds and mats so that Peter's shadow might fall on them as he passed by, and all of them were healed.

Because he chose to serve Jesus he experienced miraculous answers to his prayers.

On one occasion a Christian woman named Tabitha died, and he prayed for her to come back to life, and she did.

On two occasions when he was arrested for preaching the gospel God sent angels to break him out of jail.

Before Peter chose to serve Jesus, he was just a normal guy. His life was very natural. Very human. But when he decided to serve Jesus, He was able to do the supernatural and the superhuman.

You can accomplish a lot without Jesus. But when you choose to serve Jesus with your life, then you can accomplish the impossible.

Jesus will do things through your life that you can't imagine. He will give you the power to do things that you could have never done without Him.

So today I want to encourage you to follow the example of Peter and commit your life to serving Jesus.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SERVE JESUS?

To serve Jesus is not the same as being a do-gooder. I'm not talking about devoting your life to good deeds. That is part of what it means to be a Christian (Titus 3:8). Be a do-gooder. Do good deeds wherever you are, wherever you go. Always look for ways to help the needy and relieve the pain of the suffering.

That is very important, but you don't have to be a Christian to devote your life to good deeds. Many unbelievers are do-gooders. I'm talking about something more specific.

Doing good deeds is kind of like humility, or patience, or kindness, or gentleness. You are supposed to do those things as a Christian, but that's not what I mean by serving Jesus. Even unbelievers can do those things.

As well, to serve Jesus does not necessarily mean to quit your job and go into full-time ministry. You can serve Jesus with your life without going into full-time ministry. You must. Paul was the greatest missionary of all time, but he wasn't always in full-time ministry. In some of the places he ministered he was bi-vocational. Rather than accepting donations from the church, he worked as a tentmaker to support himself. You don't need to quit your job to serve Jesus.

What does it mean to serve Jesus? **Commit your life to the mission of Jesus.** Jesus is on a mission, and to serve Him is to adopt His mission as your mission and devote your life to it.

What is the mission of Jesus? Jesus stated His mission in Luke 19:10. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

Jesus' primary mission is not to feed the hungry or house the homeless. His primary mission is not to educate the illiterate or save endangered species. His primary mission is not political. His primary mission is not social justice. His primary mission is to seek and save the lost.

Christ's mission can be broken down into 4 tasks.

1. Evangelism:

To evangelize is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with lost people so they can get in on it if they want to.

Acts 8:4 "So those who were scattered went on their way preaching the word."

When the early church in Jerusalem came under persecution, they all fled Jerusalem. But they didn't stop serving Jesus. Wherever they went, they told lost people about Jesus and made new converts.

You and I are called to serve Jesus through evangelism or witnessing.

2. Discipleship:

To disciple someone is to help them become a mature Christian.

Matthew 28:19-20 “19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

It's not enough to evangelize. Jesus doesn't just want to save people from hell; He wants to save people from a life of sin so they live to glorify Him.

Discipleship is the task of helping believers grow to be all that God wants.

3. Church Building:

Church building involves building healthy churches.

Matthew 16:18 “... I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

God's chosen method for evangelism and discipleship is the church.

A healthy church is one that is focused on evangelism and discipleship.

Church building can mean starting new churches, or helping your church thrive.

4. Missions:

The task of missions is to take the gospel to places where there is little to no Christian witness.

Romans 15:20 “My aim is to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, so that I will not build on someone else's foundation.”

This is the mission of Jesus: To seek and save the lost through evangelism, discipleship, church building, and missions.

To be a servant of Jesus is to devote your life to that mission. It is to adopt Christ's mission for your life.

The Bible says in several places that God has called you to serve Him.

Luke 9:23 “Then he said to them all, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Jesus defined the Christian life with three terms: 1) Deny yourself – Commit to doing God’s will, not yours. 2) Take up your cross – Don’t let anything or anyone stop you from doing God’s will. 3) Follow Jesus – Devote your life to the mission of Jesus.

Mark 16:15 Then he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” Jesus commanded us to spread the gospel around the world.

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” We are commanded to be Christ’s witnesses.

Romans 12:11 “Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord.” Clearly we are commanded to serve the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:58 “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” Not only are we to serve the Lord, but we are to work and labor for the Lord; and not only that, but we are to excel in the Lord’s work. We are to serve the Lord skillfully and effectively and fruitfully.

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.”

God wants you to live a fruitful life.

What does that mean? In the Bible there are at least six types of fruit. 1) The fruit of repentance – turn away from a self-centered life to a God-focused life (Mt 3:8). 2) The fruit of the Spirit – Christlike character (Rm 6:22; Gal 5:22-23). 3) The fruit of another Christian – winning someone to Christ (Jn 4:36; Rm 1:13). 4) The fruit of good deeds (Rm 15:25-28; Col 1:10). 5) The fruit of praise (Heb 13:15). 6) The fruit of ministry – serving the cause of Christ in ministry (Jn 15:16).

Christ has chosen you and appointed you to serve Him; to serve in the mission of Christ to seek and save the lost.

And there are many ways to serve the cause of Christ. When you read through the New Testament, you can find people who served Jesus in many different ways.

1. John the Baptist served God by preaching the message of repentance to the Jews, preparing their hearts for the coming Messiah. Mk 1:1-8
2. Peter's mother. When Jesus visited her in her home, she was lying in bed with a fever, and Jesus healed her. Immediately she began to serve them. Mk 1:29-31
3. Four friends brought their paralytic friend to meet Jesus, and because it was too crowded to go through the door, they removed the roof and lowered him on a mat. Mk 2:1-5
4. After being healed by Jesus, a former demon-possessed man went out and proclaimed throughout the region how much Jesus had done for him. Mk 5:18-20
5. The twelve apostles were sent out in pairs to preach, cast out demons, and heal the sick. Mk 6:7-13
6. A little boy offered up his food to Jesus, five loaves and two fish, to help feed a multitude of five thousand people. Jn 6:1-14
7. Parents brought their little children to Jesus so that He might bless them. Mk 10:13
8. Two disciples went into Jerusalem to retrieve a colt so that Jesus could enter Jerusalem triumphantly. Mk 11:1-7
9. Simon the leper hosted Jesus at his home. Mk 14:3

10. While at Simon the leper's house, reclining at the table, a woman came in with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume (worth almost one year's worth of wages). She broke the jar and poured it on His head, anointing his body for burial. Mk 14:3-9
11. Two disciples went into Jerusalem to prepare the Passover for Christ's last supper with His disciples. Mk 14:12-16
12. There were several women who followed Jesus and took care of Him, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. Mk 15:40-41
13. When Jesus died, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, with Pilate's permission, and with the help of Nicodemus, prepared Jesus' body for burial and then placed Him in the tomb. Mk 15:42-47
14. On the morning of the resurrection, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' body. Mk 16:1
15. The resurrected Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene, and she went and told the disciples. Mk 16:11-12
16. Then Jesus appeared to two disciples walking in the country. They went and reported to the rest of the disciples. Mk 16:12-13
17. After the ascension, the disciples went out and preached everywhere about Jesus. Mk 16:19-20
18. When the church first began, all the believers held everything in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37
19. When Ananias and Sapphira dropped dead for lying about their donation, the young men got up, wrapped up their bodies, carried them out, and buried them. Acts 5:6
20. The early church opened their homes to each other for fellowship and Bible study. Acts 2:46; 5:42
21. In the early days of the church, seven men were appointed to run the widow's food program so that the apostles could devote their attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. Acts 6:4
22. Two of those seven men, Stephen and Phillip, went on to become great preachers and miracles workers. Acts 6:8-10; 8:4-7

23. Philip went as a missionary to Samaria and started a church there. Acts 8:4-7
24. Ananias, a man from Damascus, laid his hands on Saul so that he could regain his sight. Acts 9:17
25. Immediately after getting saved, Saul began preaching the gospel in the synagogues. Acts 9:20
 - a. "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in telling the good news about his Son..." Rm 1:9
26. Saul's friends helped him escape an assassination plot by lowering him in a large basket through an opening in the wall. Acts 9:25
27. The family of Stephanas devoted themselves to serving the church. 1 Cor 16:15
28. Tabitha, a Christian woman from Joppa, was always doing good works and acts of charity, including making clothes for the widows. Acts 9:36-39
29. While staying in Joppa, Peter was hosted by a disciple named Simon, a tanner. Acts 10:6
30. Agabus, a prophet from Jerusalem, went to Antioch and predicted that there would be a severe famine throughout the Roman world. Acts 11:27-28
31. Hearing the news about the famine, the disciples in Antioch sent relief to the brothers who lived in Judea. Acts 11:29
32. Paul and Barnabas were chosen to transport the money from Antioch to Jerusalem. Acts 11:30
33. In Acts 12, Mary, the mother of John Mark, hosted a prayer meeting at her house for Peter who was in jail and soon to be executed. Mk 12:12
34. Paul and Barnabas traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem to discuss with the apostles whether or not the Gentiles had to follow the Jewish laws in order to be saved. Acts 15:2-3
35. After the Jerusalem Council, several men were selected to accompany Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch to deliver the council's decision. Acts 15:22
36. In the city of Philippi, Paul and Barnabas led Lydia to Christ, and she invited them to stay at her house. This became the first meeting place for the church in Philippi. Acts 16:14-15, 40

37. After Paul and Barnabas led the Philippians jailer to Christ, he washed their wounds, brought them into his house, and set a meal before them. Acts 16:31-34
38. Priscilla and his wife Aquila hosted Paul in the city of Corinth. Acts 18:1-2
- a. They also hosted a church in their home in Rome. Rm 16:3-5
39. Romans 16 mentions many Christians who served the Lord.
- a. Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchreae. 16:1
 - b. Prisca and Aquila.
 - 1) Paul called them his coworkers in Christ. Rm 16:3
 - 2) They risked their lives for Paul's life. Rm 16:4
 - 3) They hosted a church in their home in Rome. Rm 16:5
 - c. Mary worked very hard for the church in Rome. 16:6
 - d. Urbanus is referred to as Paul's coworker in Christ. 16:9
 - e. Tryphaena and Tryphosa worked hard in the Lord. 16:12
 - f. Persis worked very hard in the Lord. 16:12
 - g. Timothy is referred to as Paul's coworker. 16:21
 - h. Tertius served as Paul's secretary, writing the book of Romans. Rm 16:22
 - i. Gaius hosted the church in Corinth in his house. Rm 16:23
40. Tychicus is called a faithful servant in the Lord; he was given the task of delivering the letters of Ephesians and Colossians. Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-8
41. Paul said that for him to live is Christ, and then he explained that that meant serving the Lord, helping other believers progress in the faith. Phil 1:21-25
42. Jesus Christ "emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant." Phil 2:7
43. Paul described Epaphroditus as a brother, coworker, fellow soldier, messenger, and minister. He came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to minister to Paul in jail. Phil 2:25-30
44. Epaphras wrestled for the Colossians in prayer, that they might stand mature. Col 4:12

I hope you can see that

- 1) you are saved to serve Jesus, and

2) there are many different ways to do that.

The list above is not an exhaustive, comprehensive list of ways to serve Jesus. It is simply an illustration to show you that there are an unlimited number of ways to serve Jesus.

So how can you get started serving Jesus?

4 STEPS TO START SERVING CHRIST

1. Learn the skills of personal evangelism.

First, learn the gospel.

The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. It is the message that you need to share with lost people in order to lead them to Christ. It is the message that lost people need to believe in order to get saved.

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.”

The gospel is simple. God, Sin, Jesus, You. God loves you and created you to love and serve Him. All of us have sinned, and our sin separates us from God and from His plan for our lives. Jesus, God’s Son, came to earth to die and pay the penalty for our sins, and then He rose again. You can be forgiven and have eternal life if you will repent and believe in Jesus.

Second, pray for your lost friends.

Romans 10:1 “Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation.”

On a regular basis you need to praying for your lost friends by name. That’s the focus of my prayers every Thursday morning.

Third, develop gospel-adorning character.

To be an effective witness you need to be a winsome witness. You need to behave in a way that attracts people to Jesus rather than turns them away.

If you're no different than the people you're trying to reach, then nobody's going to be interested in your religion.

Titus 2:9-10 “9 Slaves are to submit to their masters in everything, and to be well-pleasing, not talking back 10 or stealing, but demonstrating utter faithfulness, so that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything.”

Fourth, invite your friends to church.

You can lead your friends to Christ by personally leading them to accept Christ, and you can also invite them to church to hear the gospel.

2. Read your Bible and apply it to your life.

Let's talk about discipleship, or helping other people grow in Christ.

The first step to becoming a discipler is to read your Bible and apply it to your life. In other words, you need to become a disciple before you can disciple others.

You cannot pass on what you don't know; and you cannot share what you don't have.

To be able to teach others effectively, you need to know what you're talking about; and you need to practice what you preach.

To become qualified to disciple others is simple. Just read your Bible and do what it says.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

I recommend that you go to the church website and download one of the Bible reading plans, and just starting working your way through.

And whenever the Bible says to do something, do it.

3. Find someone to disciple and start helping them grow in Christ.

Every Christian should be disciplining someone.

Mathew 28:19 “Go, therefore, and make disciples....”

What does it mean to disciple someone? It just means help them grow. Teach and encourage them to take their next steps in Christ.

Where do you find someone to disciple?

Start with the people closest to you. If you are married, start with your spouse. If you are a parent, start with your children. Christian dads should be disciplining their kids at home. I sit down with kids three nights a week to teach them the Bible. If you are a grandparent, start with your grandkids. Find ways to help them grow in Christ.

What if your kids and grandkids are not available? Start with those who are available. Start with the person God puts in front of you. A friend. A co-worker. A teammate. A fellow church member. You can lead a Home Group.

It can be structured or not. You can meet once a week and read the Bible together. Or you can just encourage and teach them whenever you talk. You can lead them to books; you can point them to videos online. You can be a good example.

4. Become an active contributor to the church.

Finally, you can start serving Jesus by becoming an active contributor to the church.

Bring your tithe to the church. And find a way to help out.

Help with hospitality. You can be a greeter. You can help count the money. You can help set up equipment on Sunday. You can lead a Home Group. You can help us organize fun events. You can serve in CA Kids. There are many different ways to contribute to the church.

How does the church grow stronger? As each member contributes. **Ephesians 4:16** “From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.”

CONCLUSION

God created you for a purpose – to be a servant of Jesus Christ. To serve the cause of Christ.

Communism is dead in many places. But at its height in the 1950s-80s, there was no ideology on the planet that called for a greater commitment. One young man, a communist, wrote this letter to his fiancé, to explain why he was ending their engagement:

“WE communists have a high casualty rate; we are the ones who get shot, hung, and ridiculed, and fired from our jobs, and in every other way made as uncomfortable as possible. A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to the party every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive. We communists do not have the time or money for many movies, or concerts, or t-bone steaks, or decent homes, or new cars; we have been described as fanatics. We are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great

overshadowing factor; the struggle for world communism. We communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money can buy; we have a cause to fight for; a definite purpose in life; we subordinate our petty, personal selves into a great movement of humanity. And if our personal lives seem hard, or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to the party, then we are adequately compensated by the thought that each of us in his small way is contributing to something new, and true, and better for mankind. There is one thing which I am in dead earnest about, and that is the communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife, my mistress, and my breaded meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night. Its hold on me grows, not lessens, as time goes on. Therefore I cannot carry on a friendship or a love affair without or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas, and actions according to how they affect the communist cause and by their attitude toward it. I've already been to jail because of my ideals, and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad."

This is the same kind of commitment that Jesus demands from every one of us to his cause.

If more Christians were as committed to serving the cause of Christ as this young man was to communism, we could turn this world upside down.

And that's my challenge today. Commit yourself to be a servant of Jesus.