

*The*  
Ultimate  
Purpose  
*of*  
Christianity



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Christianity

*Securing Your Place in Christ*

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# Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction	ix
1. Discovering the Ultimate Purpose	1
2. Becoming like Jesus	9
3. Discipleship	19
4. Understanding the Likeness of God	31
5. The Love of God	37
6. The Crucifixion and the Godhead	49
7. The Key Success Factor in Discipleship	61



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# Introduction

**R**OMANS 8:28 SAYS, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” The call of God that brings us into Christianity is a product of God’s purpose. That is, we are called into Christianity for a specific purpose. Note that it is according to God’s *purpose* (singular), not *purposes*. There are other secondary individual purposes, but there is a primary/general purpose that covers every Christian. It is the purpose that everyone must fulfill in order to qualify for rewards at the end. This is what I refer to as “the ultimate purpose of Christianity.” It is “ultimate” because without a person fulfilling that purpose, his or her Christianity will have been in vain or unsuccessful.

God is concerned that not many people in Church today understand or have knowledge of this general/ultimate purpose of Christianity, and this lack of understanding is a serious obstacle to their spiritual growth/progress. In Hosea 4:6, God says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” Note that this Scripture is referring to God’s people, not outsiders or unbelievers. The fact that a person has become a

## The Ultimate Purpose of Christianity

child of God does not exempt him or her from the consequences of lack of knowledge.

Failure to understand or appreciate the true or ultimate purpose of Christianity amounts to building on a defective foundation. The Bible says, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3). We need a deeper knowledge and understanding of the true/ultimate purpose of Christianity, so that we can give it the commitment, devotion and priority it deserves.

This is the reason for this book. My goal is to help Christians clarify their values by helping them to understand what their lives are really all about, and where their efforts should be concentrated.

As we study this important issue, I pray that God will open your eyes of understanding, and enable you to receive the Spirit and the life of His Word to revive the divine vision for your life, in Jesus’ name.

## Chapter 1

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# Discovering the Ultimate Purpose

**O**UR VALUES DETERMINE what we judge as good or evil, important or unimportant, and how we behave or respond to people, things, or issues. The value we attach to things is determined by our understanding and appreciation of their purpose.

The purpose of a thing is actually its power, because that is the reason for its existence. Nothing exists without a purpose. If we study the whole of creation carefully, we will discover that not one thing exists without a definite purpose. Those things that seem to lack purpose are actually things whose purposes are unknown or hidden, and wherever purpose is unknown, abuse will be inevitable. The word *abuse* is said to be a combination of two words, “abnormal” and “use.” Anything you put to use outside the purpose for which it was made is an abnormal use, which is an abuse.

The danger of abuse is that it can hurt, kill or destroy, which sounds much like what Jesus said in John 10:10a: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” Abuse is the greatest weapon the devil uses against mankind today. The devil will do anything possible to conceal purpose in order to promote abuse. Thus, to avoid abuse, the purpose of a thing must be known.

## The Ultimate Purpose of Christianity

Christianity, like every other creation of God, has its purpose. We can even say that Christianity is a product of purpose. It should be easy for us to appreciate this, because everything man has made or produced also has its source in purpose. I doubt very much if cars, telephones, radio, television, and boats would have been in existence without a purpose. In the same way, God also had a definite purpose for Christianity, and lack of knowledge of this purpose will lead to abuse.

People are Christians today for various reasons outside of Christianity's true purpose, and this has led to various abuses or anomalies in the Church today. The question, is why are *you* a Christian? Not why other people think you are a Christian—this is not about other people's opinions, but yours. Why do you go to church? Why are you in your particular denomination? Why do you attend Sunday service, but ignore Bible study or prayer meetings? As I said earlier, where purpose is unknown abuse is inevitable. Anyone who fails to understand God's ultimate purpose of Christianity will eventually abuse it.

We all need to understand the ultimate purpose of Christianity, so that we can begin to rearrange our priorities and set the right goals for ourselves. After all, if we succeed in all the secondary purposes but fail in the ultimate purpose, we will have missed it all. Our eventual success will be determined by how we understood and handled the ultimate purpose. To understand this ultimate purpose, we must go back to the very beginning.

### The Beginning

The beginning of everything is found in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 1:1-25, God created the heavens, the earth and every other thing except man. Everything God created was created for the benefit of man, who He eventually created in Genesis 1:26-27: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his

## Discovering the Ultimate Purpose

own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them” (NKJV).

Note that in verse 26, God declared His intension to create man, who would have dominion over all other creation. In verse 27, the actual creation of man was reported. Thus, we can say the actual creation of man took place between verses 26 and 27. The ultimate purpose of Christianity can be located between these two verses. So let's take a closer look at these again.

Verse 26 says, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” In this verse, God declares His intention to make man first in His image and then in His likeness. This means in creating man, God specifically desired that man conform to two distinct aspects of Himself—His *image* and His *likeness*. But verse 27 says, “So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them.” There is no record of God making man in His likeness.

Here lies the key to understanding the ultimate purpose of Christianity. We should understand the absence of likeness in verse 27 is neither a typographical nor a reporting error, but rather an indication the process of making man in the likeness of God was to follow. That is why Genesis 9:6 states that man was created only in the image of God: “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” For the purpose of understanding, we can say the creation of man was to be in two stages.

### Stage 1: The Image of God

The first stage is as recorded in Genesis 2:7: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living being.” We can say this stage involves the forming of man from the dust of the ground and the impartation of the Spirit to make man a living soul, having a spirit, a soul, and a body. This is the image of God in man.

Some people reason or assume that man is the image of God because we look like God in appearance (i.e. having eyes, nose, mouth, hands, etc.). If this were true, then apes should also be assumed to be in the image of God; however, we know they are not. Although apes look much like man, they can never be man, simply because they are not in the image of God. This is where those who propound the theory of evolution miss it: they do not understand that animals have only soul and body without a spirit. It is the spirit that distinguishes man from animals.

Some people also erroneously assume that man is the image of God because we have five senses. This is also not true, because animals also have five senses. Man is the ultimate creation of God and obviously the most precious thing to Him, which is why He allowed us to share His image to distinguish us from all other creatures. So we are the image of God because we have a spirit, soul, and a body. This was the first stage in the creation of man.

### **Stage 2: The Likeness of God**

This stage involves the creation of man in the likeness of God. Now, the likeness of God here refers to the character of God. Character is all the mental or moral qualities that make a person, group, nation, etc., different from others. God's intension to make man in His likeness meant that man was to have the same mental or moral qualities as God (i.e. in behavior, attitude, or manners). Like father, like son; like God, like man. This stage is also as recorded in Genesis 2:8: "The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed" (NKJV). The purpose of the Garden of Eden was not just a place where the obedience of man would be tested, but also a place where the final process of the creation of man was to be accomplished. It is at the Garden that God intended to impart His likeness to man.

Now, let's try to illustrate the issue of likeness. I usually illustrate it like this: Assume that you give birth to a child who looks very much like you in terms of physical appearance (image), and you send him to live with your brother in another country and culture. After twenty years, who will the child behave like, you or your

## Discovering the Ultimate Purpose

brother? The child will obviously acquire the character of the people and culture where he or she grew up; he or she will talk and act like them.

This is the principle of discipleship, which can be defined as a process by which character is formed through organized or experiential learning. It was by this same principle that God was to produce His likeness in man at the Garden of Eden. God did not impart His likeness by miracle; it was to be formed through a discipleship process at Eden, where God was to have given man a continuous revelation of Himself until he became like Him. We can therefore say the second stage of the creation of man was the forming of the likeness of God in man.

### The Purpose

To appreciate the purpose of Christianity, we must understand the effect of what happened in the Garden of Eden. According to Genesis 2:8, God planted a garden in Eden and put man in it. We have seen the purpose of the Garden was to produce the likeness of God in man. However, man was not patient enough to complete the process. Instead, man accepted the devil's offer of a shortcut: "Then the serpent said to the woman, 'you will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it [the fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'" (Gen. 3:4-5, NKJV).

The devil deceived Adam and Eve into believing that eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would instantly produce the likeness of God in them. Now, was it just coincidence the devil deceived man with the likeness of God? Of course not! The devil knew exactly why man had been put in the Garden, and his target was to abort that purpose. For those who say the forbidden fruit the devil used to tempt Eve was sex, I recommend they study Eve's comment in Genesis 3:6: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (NKJV). Note that she

saw the tree was good for *food*. Her conclusion was that the fruit was to be desired for wisdom—an aspect of the likeness of God.

Evidently, man was aware of the need to become like God in character, but decided to accept the devil's shortcut rather than wait for God to complete His work. God Himself also declared in Genesis 3:22, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever . . ." (NKJV). Although this was said by God in a negative sense, the phrase "has become like one of us" shows that man was not like God before that time. The decision God took in the next verse also shows this likeness was not in line with His original desire to make man in His likeness. Although the original plan of God was to make man in His own image and likeness, the process of producing the likeness of God in man was aborted at the Garden of Eden because of man's disobedience. Everything God did, has done, or is doing since the fall of man are all aimed at resuming and completing what was aborted in the Garden.

We can therefore confidently conclude the ultimate purpose of Christianity is to make man in the likeness of God. That is why Romans 8:29 says, "For whom He foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (NKJV). God has predestined everyone who will come to Him to be conformed to His likeness, which was fully manifested in His Son, *Jesus*. As Hebrews 1:3 states, "[Jesus], Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (NKJV). *Jesus* is the express image of God's person; that is, the express manifestation of God's character. (Don't be confused by the word *image* being used in these passages. This word can also be used for *character*, depending on the context in which it is used. That is why *image* and *likeness* are used interchangeably in the different translations. In fact, some translations like the *NIV* actually use the word *likeness*.)

## Discovering the Ultimate Purpose

In concluding this chapter, I would like to declare that God's ultimate purpose in Christianity is to give mankind another opportunity to complete what was aborted in the Garden of Eden. It is very important to God that we conform to His likeness, which is why He can declare, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). We have no choice in the matter: we must become like Jesus. Jesus is our example of the likeness of God.

This is the ultimate aim of the Christian life, and this must be the goal of any serious-minded Christian. God has promised a new heaven and a new earth (see Rev. 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:13), but it is only those who allow God to recreate them in His image and likeness who will qualify to live in that new earth.