Better - Part 1

# One Day with God

# (Psalm 84:1-2, 10)

Today we’re starting a brand-new message series called “Better”, because better is just better. And so, we’re going to be looking at making better choices recognizing that the decisions we make today will determine who we become and what we’re able to do tomorrow. And so, when life hands you choices, you want to choose better. But the problem is that so many of us are pursuing the good life. And what I mean is that we think that we’ll be happy if we have nice things, if we’re living a life of convenience, if we’re having lots of fun, and the reality is that many of us have settled for the good life when God has something so much better for us.

The message I want to share with you today is entitled “One Day with God”, because one day with God is better. Now could you imagine waking up every day with passion and purpose in your life, knowing that you’re doing exactly what God has called you to do, and being so consumed with pleasing God that nothing could keep you from it? Well, today I want to encourage you, because God has uniquely gifted you, he has created you with a specific purpose to make a difference in this world, and I believe that not only is that possible, but that’s exactly what God wants for every single one of us.

Psalm chapter 84 says,

“How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God… Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked” (Psalms 84:1-2, 10).

You see, one day with God is better, because you can know the forgiveness of your sin, having access to the throne room of God, and having confidence that you are a child of God. Therefore, you can wake every morning knowing his power, his provision, and his plans to prosper you…plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11). Now of course, that doesn’t mean that you’re never going to have a bad day, that the sun is always going to be shining, but what that does mean is that in the middle of the storms of life, no matter what you’re facing, no matter what you’re going through, Jesus is your peace. And better is just better, because the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

The problem is that many of us don’t understand why we were created and so we live our lives aimlessly, without purpose, and actually begin to look to other people to find approval. Before long and without even being aware of it we begin to find our identity in what other people think of us, forgetting that God created us for himself and for his glory. That’s what the Bible tells us in Isaiah chapter 43, God said,

“Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth — everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made" (Isaiah 43:7).

And so, we were created to glorify God, and yet we spend so much of our time pursuing the good life, being concerned about what other people think about us, and forgetting that God created us for his divine purpose and glory. This morning, I want to challenge you to discover what is better so that when life hands you choices that you would choose better. And so, today I’m going to share with you three ways to gain passion and purpose in your life, because better is just better. Number one, is letting go of the good.

## 1. Letting Go of the Good

What I mean is that sometimes the good things in our lives are simply distractions keeping us from what is better. One time a man ran up to Jesus, fell on his knees before him saying, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answered, “Why do you call me good?” No one is good except God alone” (Mark 10:17-18). Jesus corrected this man because good was the wrong standard of judgment. In other words, God’s standard of good is different from ours; and so today God is challenging us to let go of the good, to stop settling for good, to stop seeking the good life, when God has something so much better.

I wonder today what are those good things that are holding you back from something that is so much better? What are those distractions that are keeping you from gaining passion and purpose in your life? You see, most of us are not drawn to things that are blatantly rebellious, but we’re distracted by things that seem right, things that are good. In fact, Proverbs chapter 14 tells us,

“There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12).

In other words, there’s a way that seems right, it seems good; but the warning is very clear, that which seems good may actually be distracting, harmful, and even counterproductive. We can see this in the beginning, when God placed Adam and Eve in the middle of the Garden, surrounded by all his goodness and gracious provision. God told them in Genesis chapter 2, that they could eat from any tree in the garden except one, and that was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die (Genesis 2:16-17).

Now what’s really amazing is that Eve wasn’t drawn to the evil side, she wasn’t desiring to know evil, but Satan came along, he’s disguised as a serpent and he tempts Eve to doubt what God had said. It’s just like he does today, he comes along twisting the Word of God, and he caused Eve to doubt the goodness of God. Genesis chapter 3 tells us that Eve looked at the tree again, she considered it again, and verse six says,

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, and so she took some and ate it…” (Genesis 3:6).

Notice what Eve was drawn to; she was drawn to the good things; she was drawn to that which was good, pleasing, and desirable. And so, we need to understand that just because something is good doesn’t mean it’s of God. Just because something is good doesn’t mean that God doesn’t have something better. And Moses is a perfect example of this; he was born in poverty, but ended up living in the palace of the Pharaoh, and Hebrews chapter 11 tells us,

“When he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to his reward” (Hebrews 11:24-26).

And so, even though Moses could’ve chosen a life of comfort, he chose better, he chose his calling over comfort, because he was looking ahead to his reward. And so, instead of a life of luxury and extravagance, he chose what was better, regarding disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than all the treasures of Egypt. He let go of the good knowing that there was something indescribably better. Moses was walking by faith and not by sight, gaining passion and purpose in his life, because number two, he was striving for what’s better.

## 2. Striving for What’s Better

You see, Moses recognized his purpose, he knew that God had called him, and so nobody could talk him out of doing what God had called him to do. In the same way, whenever you and I are living by faith, when we’re striving for what’s better, being obedient to our calling, being faithful in the little things, we’re choosing that which is better and glorifying God. Moses recognized that there was value in comfort, but God’s calling was better. He knew there was value in having fun, but being faithful to God’s calling was better. He understood the value of people’s approval, but knowing that he couldn’t please everybody, he served God’s purposes which was so much better. It was of greater value and so he kept striving for what’s better, looking ahead to his reward.

Nehemiah is a great example of this, the Bible tells us that he was heartbroken because he’d been exiled to a foreign land, Jerusalem was lying in ruins, and even though he was fearful of confronting the king he said,

“Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins?"

The king responded graciously and asked him, "What is it you want?"

Nehemiah prayed quickly before answering and said, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it" (Nehemiah 2:2-5).

The king agreed and rallied behind Nehemiah, allowing him to get a team together, gathers some supplies, and goes back to Jerusalem to begin the work. And so, he climbs a ladder, he’s up on the wall, putting stones in place, he’s working when suddenly two guys come up and start shouting insults at him. The Bible says they ridiculed them saying, “This is stupid, it’s impossible, come down and let’s talk rationally about this.” Now, I want you to notice what Nehemiah does; he’s working, he’s putting stones in place, and he looks down and says,

"I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:3).

And so, basically, he says, “I don’t have time for that, because I’ve chosen what’s better. I can’t be distracted by your nonsense, your criticism or your ridicule, because I’m doing what God has called me to do.” And so, he is very purposeful and says, “I can’t come down.”

This morning, I’m believing that there are some of you here who need to make that your own; to determine always to be striving for what’s better, knowing what God has called you to do. And maybe that whatever may not seem like a big thing right now, but you just remain faithful to that one thing; and like Moses you keep striving for what’s better, keep looking forward to your reward, keep doing what God has called you to do, because it’s inevitable, you’re going to be distracted, but you can’t come down, your striving for what’s better. And then number three, you’re going to keep gaining passion and purpose in your life, your choosing better because you’re living in God’s presence.

## 3. Living in God’s Presence

This is a choice that I want to encourage you to make, but the problem is that most of us by default choose just the opposite. You see, by not choosing, by living with indecision, we lose sight of our divine purpose and we end up finding ourselves far from God’s presence. Yet God created us so that we would enjoy him and that he could enjoy us; and so today I want to encourage you to live with a purposeful awareness of God’s presence.

You see, we can choose to start our day with prayer, devotions, and Bible study; and starting off the day that way is really good, but the problem is that when you have this mindset, that you have time with God, and then you have your daily routine, suddenly your life becomes compartmentalized; because you have your spiritual life over here and then you have your normal life over here. And so, I want to encourage you to choose better, to choose what I believe is a more Biblical model, and that is spending the day with God. Recognizing that this is the day that the Lord has made and all day long, all of the time, you can be aware that God’s leading you, that he’s guiding you, that he’s speaking to you and reassuring you. We don’t have to put God in a box where we have our time with God and then we have our own time; but we can choose what’s better and literally spend the day with God.

You see, in the Old Testament, in ages past, God was in the temple and the people would go there to meet with God. But with the coming of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and the subsequent giving of the Holy Spirit everything changed. You don’t have to go somewhere to be with God, in fact, for those of us who are Christians, it’s just so much better. The Bible says in first Corinthians,

“Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God…” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

And so, we’re the temple of the living God, he’s come to live in you, and so, as a believer, wherever you go you’re bringing God with you. As a matter fact, the apostle Paul quotes the prophets saying,

“God has said, “I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God and they will be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

God is living inside of us, he’s walking with us, not so that we can have a devotional time with God, but so that we can have a day with God. Not only that, but so you can have a week, a month, a year, you can literally do life with an unending awareness of the presence of God; because everything has now become spiritual.

There is no separation, no compartmentalization, because if you’re a Christian, if you’re born again and filled with the Spirit of the living God, everything is spiritual. It’s all worship; and so, whether you’re texting your mom, studying for a test, driving to work, or going to the grocery store, God is there. That’s why the Bible says,

“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17).

And so, when life gives you choices, choose better, because whatever you do, better is one day with God.

But how do we really do that, how do we have a day with God?

You see, if you’re anything like me, you may have the best of intentions, but then you get a text, or someone calls you, or you turn on the TV, and the next thing you know you are asleep. The next day you wake up and life just keeps happening, so what we need to do is train ourselves, disciplining ourselves and developing habits so that we can experience a continual awareness of God’s presence.

As we close I want to share with you three habits to develop, three spiritual disciplines that we all can do, and we’re going to choose better. We’re going to live each day purposely doing what the Bible says to do. And so, number one, we’re going to pray continually. That’s what the Bible says in first Thessalonians:

“Pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Now, you may be wondering how in the world you’re supposed to do that? But it’s actually pretty simple and most of you already do something similar all-day long. You know, you’ve all got your phone, right? You’ve got your technology, and so, many of you are communicating with people all day long. Think about communicating with God in the same way, you do what the Bible says, just like your posting this or that, tweeting this, liking that, just short bursts of communication all day long. You see, it doesn’t have to be an hour of spiritual warfare or even “Lord Jesus, bless this meal” even though there are certainly times for that, but just praying continually, communicating with God throughout the day. It’s just a constant ongoing communication with God, praying continually, talking to him about anything and everything.

And then the second habit we want to develop is keeping in step with God. The apostle Paul said it this way,

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

To keep in step with God, it’s not going to happen by chance, it’s got to be purposeful, and you’ve got to choose better. It means you’re in the Word of God, maybe you’re following a reading plan, and then you pull out passages to study and dig deeper. When you do that, when you spend time with God, he’s going to speak to you, he’s going to bring his Word to your mind. And so, as you get to know him better in the Word, his Spirit is going to prompt you to do something, and when he does you just do it. You obey, you keep in step with his Spirit, you choose better.

And so, number one you develop the habit of praying continually, number two keeping in step with God, and then number three, earnestly seeking God. In Psalm chapter 63, the psalmist cried out,

“O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life my lips will glorify you” (Psalms 63:1-3).

Now many of us have never cried out to the Lord like that, and if you haven’t it’s probably because you’ve never developed an appetite for the things of God. You see, you develop a taste for the things that you eat and many of us are feeding on the things of this world, the good life, when God has something so much better. And if you start to seek him, if you’re earnestly seeking him, and you’re feeding on his Word and enjoying his presence, you’ll realize that he’s so much better. And you’ll never again settle for the good life, never settle for something less, because you want to know his forgiveness, his grace, his power, his mercy, and his presence in your life. You’ll want what is better because it is just better.

You see, once you “taste and see that the Lord is good” you’ll develop an appetite for him (Psalms 34:8). You won’t want to return to a compartmentalized life where here’s your quiet time, or Sundays are your day to worship, but you’ll live with him seven days a week with an ongoing never-ending awareness of his presence. You’ll find yourself doing life with God, week after week, month after month, year after year, choosing what is better.

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