



## WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?

As we continue on our journey with Jesus, it's key that we discuss where you fit into this whole journey. We've shared how God saves us, the Bible guides us, people support us, and prayer helps us make sense of it all. While this is amazing, it's easy to miss the invitation in all this information.

God made you, yes, but He made you with a specific purpose in mind. That is your specific quest on your journey. Your purpose is the specific design God divinely placed on you. The conclusion to Growth Track for us is actually the beginning for you. Over the next three sessions, we're going to unpack one of the most impressive things God ever created—you.

We're about to look at where your individual purpose fits into God's grand plan for humanity. What part do you get to play in God's story?

Before we get too theological, this question makes me think of biscuits. It may have something to do with my Southern roots, but I love few things more than a freshly baked biscuit with butter. From the smell to the texture to the flavor, there is little not to adore (minus the calories).

Biscuits are made from shockingly simple ingredients: butter, flour, and buttermilk. On their own, each of these ingredients is not very impressive. You can't eat plain flour. You'll get sick from drinking buttermilk from the carton. While butter is tasty, most folks don't want to eat a tub of it. As individual ingredients, they seem incomplete. However, something beautiful happens when a baker brings everything together with perfect technique. Those ingredients morph into a product far better than any individual element.

While we know it's true for biscuits, it's also true for our lives. Take a look at how the Apostle Paul addresses this reality in Romans 8. Paul shows us how God turns bad ingredients into good products all the time.



## **Romans 8:28-29**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

So what does this have to do with biscuits? Just like baking involves combining individual ingredients to make something collectively amazing, God does the same thing with your life. As Paul said, God takes “all things” and works them together for His good and His goal. Like a creative chef, He adds everything you need at the perfect time to create the best possible result.

At first glance, this passage may seem to suggest that only good experiences come to Christians. Unfortunately, it's the opposite. Paul is saying that all things, good and bad, are transformed into good by our God. We just have to trust the process.

“Trust the process.” This is a concept drilled into your head by anyone on a journey toward better health. It goes beyond muscle aches and carb withdrawal from cutting back on biscuits, though. We must trust God's process in our lives, as well. God doesn't promise us a life free of trouble, but according to Romans 8:28, He promises to bring good out of all things—even the awful.

So, when you face adversities, trust the process. Actually, let's rephrase that. Trust *His* process. God is bringing something sensational from your situation.

Why is this important? We must truly explore what God is trying to teach us from our experiences—even the bad ones. As a matter of fact, we often get closer to our purpose through our most painful moments. I know I have seen this play out in my own life.

When I was a child, my father suffered a series of serious strokes. This stripped him of his memories and robbed him of his ability to communicate. Due to the brain damage, my father didn't know who I was. He didn't know who my mom was. He didn't know how to speak. Within an instant, our father was stolen from us by sickness.



My dad's tragic illness was heartbreaking to experience and challenging to make sense of for the whole family. However, some hope broke through. The situation was bad, but God brought good from it. My family grew inseparably close. My father was set free from addiction. We worked together to communicate by making up our own language. Ultimately, my dad's sickness gave him the happiest heart I've ever known and gave us the gift of a renewed relationship. Through my dad's illness, I discovered my passion for teaching, language, and helping people process pain.

I understand how this can sound like I'm minimizing my dad's illness or, even worse, making it about me. That is not the message, though. My father's disability was detrimental. I hated nothing more than seeing him suffer and my mom mourn. However, salvation always invites us to see the bigger picture. We must learn to tell our stories in a way that represents redemption, not affliction.

How do we do that? Through the practice of reframing. With a spiritual mindset, reframing is essentially shining a spotlight on God's goodness in the middle of difficult scenarios.

Here is a simple example of reframing. You look out the window and notice it's raining outside. You could easily say, "Oh shoot, it's so gross outside. Now I'm stuck in the house all day." However, you could also reframe it by saying, "Fantastic! This is the perfect opportunity to have some time for myself, relax, and stay cozy inside all day." Do you see the difference? The situation was the same, but the observation was drastically different.

While it's easy on a gloomy day, the practice is much harder with life's serious challenges. The harder the circumstance, the harder it will be to reframe it. However, there's always a way God can bring good from a bad situation. That doesn't mean the situation is good; it just proves God is. Regardless, we must learn how to replace our broken narratives with redeemed ones. As we tell our stories, both to ourselves and to others, a redemptive narrative is imperative.

We are ending Growth Track by inviting you to see the specific will God has for you. We know this can be a little cloudy, so let's make it clear. All we're going to do for the next three sessions is slowly work toward forming one sentence. This sentence will be



called your purpose statement. This will be a single affirmation that you can carry with you every day. You should use it as a filter for all decisions—both big and small.

To arrive at your personalized statements, start with the moments that are shaping your purpose. Please take some serious time to remember two significant life experiences—one good and one bad. While writing your purpose statement, this will likely help you understand the context in which you may be called. Your past experiences will show you what you need to change in the future or whom you may need to serve.

When examining an experience, this is how to add a redemptive reframing to the moment:

**Identify the pain.** With bad experiences, this is easy. You may be able to point to sleepless nights, horrific memories, or even bring up a text that shows why you're hurting so badly. You need to name the pain before trying to frame it. Wait, but didn't we ask you to think of a good experience, too? Yes! There is pain in that, too. Why? Because of growing pains. Just as hurting joints signal a growth spurt, you need to also identify how your spiritual growth is stretching and shaping you.

**Investigate the possible outcomes.** Paul makes a proactive choice to consider the glory that can come from any story—regardless of its difficulty. Always look for the positive ways God can use your pain. He can use it to allow you to help others. He can use it to reveal your resilience. He can leverage your situation to make you strong.

**Invert the narrative.** Find a new view of whatever is happening within you. This is where we adopt a “redemptive narrative.” A redemptive narrative is when God brings good from bad things. Paul says, “Therefore...all things work together for good.” Whenever you see “therefore” in the Bible, you should ask yourself, “What's it there for?” This word suggests a conclusion is coming. Paul concludes that he will remember God while reflecting on all the ways God has come through on his behalf.

When Paul says “all things” will work out for good, he literally means everything you can imagine.

The lovely and the deadly.



The wins and losses.

The heartbreak and the reconciliation.

The hard and the hopeful.

So, when you get to the workbook page, write down your experiences and begin to reframe them. This will help push you closer to your overall purpose because you're examining the meaning behind the moments that brought you here.

Your past experiences, even the bad ones, shape your purpose. We see this all over the Bible. King David taught us how to grieve and repent. Why? If you look at Scripture, the guy had a lot to process with God. Moses was abandoned by his mom and then adopted by the royal family. This allowed him to ultimately have the tools to set his people free. Joseph learned he could interpret dreams while in prison. Do you see it? Even an awful moment can provide you with amazing meaning.

Your existence is made up of experiences. Please take a look at the workbook and begin examining these experiences, which will help you evaluate the reason for your existence.



My most formative **positive experience** was:

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What is the growing pain you experienced? (Identify the pain.)

In what ways can good come from this situation? (Investigate the positive outcomes.)

How can God use this experience to empower you to help others? (Invert the narrative.)



My most formative **negative experience** was:

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What is the growing pain you experienced? (Identify the pain.)

In what ways can good come from this situation? (Investigate the positive outcomes.)

How can God use this experience to empower you to help others? (Invert the narrative.)