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Community of Purpose

Colossians 3.12-17

Series: The DNA of TVC

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The Village Church

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I. **The Purpose Story**

- A. I was a brand new faculty member at WVU
 - 1. It was the fall of 1981
 - 2. As part of the College of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences, I was one of the faculty members responsible for the design and implementation of a new teacher education program
 - 3. And our faculty was part of a state organization in which all the colleges and universities in the state who had similar programs participated
 - a. And there was a retreat at one of the state parks
 - b. All of the faculty from all over the state who were involved in what was called sport pedagogy were attending
- B. I was late
 - 1. Everyone else had gathered
 - a. All the men were in a large dormitory room
 - b. There were about 20 men present
 - 2. They were sitting around on their beds, shooting the breeze
 - a. Catching up on whatever news and gossip they could, having not seen each other since the last state conference
 - b. They all seemed to know each other
 - 3. But I was the new guy
 - a. Aside from the three or four other male faculty members from WVU, I knew nobody
 - 4. At some point before I arrived, the conversation had gravitated to the academic business at hand
 - a. They were talking, evidently, about the fairly innovative changes we had made in our sport pedagogy program at WVU
 - b. And my name had come up
 - c. The impression had been given that I was largely responsible for the conceptual design of our program
- C. So it was in the midst of that conversation that I walked
 - 1. Knowing nothing about what had been discussed
 - 2. So when I walked in, and one of my colleagues said, “Well, there’s Hawkins now!”
 - 3. And immediately, another guy – who turned out to be the Department chair at one of the other colleges – turned to me and asked this question:

- a. “So Hawkins. What’s your purpose?”
- D. Since I had no idea what the context was for the question, I said the first thing that came into my mind
 - 1. I said, “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”
- E. The man rolled his eyes, and shook his head, and furrowed his brow
 - 1. His wasn’t the only furrowed brow in the room, either
 - 2. The man, first of all was an agnostic
 - a. And second, he was interested in the purpose for our academic program, not in my own religious beliefs
 - 3. He tried to clarify the question
 - a. And I tried to respond with a more relevant explanation
- F. But his question, “What’s your purpose?” is an incredibly important question
 - 1. And one of the great purpose questions ever posed is the one in the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism
 - a. “What is the chief end of man?”
 - 2. In the 17th Century, the Westminster divines expressed the issue of purpose in just those terms
 - a. “What is one’s chief end”; “What is one’s primary purpose in life?”
- G. At the same time, my response to my new agnostic friend’s query caught his attention
 - 1. He was a curious sort
 - 2. He wondered, “How could a reasonably intelligent university scholar actually believe in that Christianity nonsense?”
 - 3. So after the academic conversation wound down, he introduced himself to me
 - a. And we went out to a nearby restaurant for coffee (tea for me!)
 - 4. And as I got to know him, I turned the tables
 - a. Because I’m a curious sort as well
 - b. And I started asking him questions
 - c. I poked and prodded
 - d. I stripped the layers of onion in his thinking
 - e. I asked about his belief system
 - f. And I graciously, but relentlessly, kept posing questions that he had a harder and harder time answering
 - 5. He later told me that those two hours were some of the most exhausting two hours he could remember ever spending in conversation
- H. It took a number of years
 - 1. But through the faithfulness of a believing wife
 - a. And the godly example of one his own faculty colleagues
 - b. And, I trust, through my friendship with him as we met in conferences over the years
 - 2. When he died about 15 years later of cancer, he was a believer in Jesus
 - 3. And when he did, he had the same purpose as I did
 - a. “To glorify God and to enjoy him forever”

- I. We are engaged in a series, appropriate to the beginning of a new year, on the DNA of TVC
 1. The DNA – the fundamental identity, the essential elements of who we are, as TVC
 2. Those elements come down to the church’s mission statement
 - a. We are building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ
 3. And to the core values of TVC
 - a. We value the glory of God
 - b. We value the Word of God
 - c. We value the Sufficiency of Christ
 - d. We value the Ministry of the Holy Spirit
 - e. We value the Great Commission of Christ
 - f. We value the Body of Christ
 - g. We value Prayer
- J. In our last message is shared something of the story of how the DNA of TVC was identified and articulated
 1. About how we spent time observing and listening to the fabric of our community
 - a. About how TVC interacted with Shell Point and the surrounding community
 - b. About how we talked to numerous people – church people and others – about TVC
 2. And through that process, we began to articulate who we are as TVC
 - a. And the mission statement emerged
 - b. Building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ
 3. The core elements of the mission statement – forgiveness, purpose and hope – are elements that any church, we believe, could affirm
 - a. But we noted that there are aspects of those three that are especially relevant to TVC – a senior-oriented church in a retirement community, where the majority of members are retired
 4. But of those three – forgiveness, purpose and hope – the most obviously relevant one is purpose
 - a. Because practically everybody who retires struggles with the issue of purpose
 5. We live a lifetime – especially the men – building our identity in our professional lives
 - a. And then, when we leave that profession behind, we wonder – “Now what?”
 - b. What defines my existence? Who am I now that my professional life is in the rear view mirror?
 - c. We know that we can’t drive our lives by living in our rear view mirrors – anymore than we can drive our cars by fixating our full attention on our rear view mirrors

6. We know that there are plenty of things to occupy our time
 - a. Especially at Shell Point
 - b. We can all find innumerable things to do at Shell Point – there’s something to interest everyone
 - c. But it’s one thing to occupy time
 - d. It’s another thing to live with meaning and purpose
- K. So, at TVC we seek to redefine our purpose
 1. To reimagine our purpose in light of the gospel
 2. To engage with a community in Jesus Christ
 3. And allowed Christ to define and instill His purpose in us

II. **The Great Purpose**

- A. As we explore what purpose means here at TVC, it’s important to remember that the purpose of any local church is intimately related to the overall purpose that Jesus gives to the Church in general – the “big C Church”
 1. And we know the overall purpose of the big C Church is the Great Commission
 - a. And the Great Commission is one of the core values of TVC
- B. The Great Commission is that Commission Jesus gave to the Church as one of His final commands
 1. It’s most memorable description is found in Matthew 28
 2. **Matthew 28:18–20** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
 - b. 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,
 - c. 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
 - d. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
 3. Under the authority of Jesus – the risen Lord, savior of the church, the King of kings
 - a. The church is to go and make disciples of all nations
 4. That mission is to take the good news of Jesus Christ to every people, tongue, tribe and nation
 - a. Which is why TVC is so committed to missions – to the missionary enterprise – in all its dimensions
 - b. And why TVC glorifies God in our commitment to giving to what we call The Great Commission Fund of our denomination, the C&MA
 - c. And why the C&MA has 10 times the number of churches and associated believers overseas than it has in the US
 5. And while Matthew has the most memorable statement of the Great Commission, you can find the Great Commission in all of the gospels, and in the book of Acts
 - a. Which highlights the centrality, the importance, of the Great Commission in the church

- b. And not just in the Church at large, but in every local church
- c. Including TVC
- 6. So as we explore what purpose means here at TVC, the Great Commission is driving genome, determining so much of the gene sequence in our own cell nucleus
 - a. It is much of who we are

III. The Everything Purpose

- A. One of the great purpose texts in the NT is Colossians 3.17
 - 1. I would call it, “the everything purpose”
- B. Colossians 3:17 (ESV) —
 - 1. 17 And whatever you do,
 - a. in word or deed,
 - 2. do everything
 - a. in the name of the Lord Jesus,
 - 3. giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- C. It’s the “everything purpose” because it says “whatever you do”
 - 1. Whatever you do means, well, whatever you do
 - a. That everything we do has purpose
 - 2. And then it says, “do everything”
- D. And the everything is to be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus”
- E. When we connect that with the Great Commission, one of the things it means is that we act under the authority of the Lord Jesus
 - 1. Remember, Jesus’ prefaces His Great Commission with the statement, “All authority under heaven and earth has been given to me”
 - a. And then He says, “Go therefore...”
 - 2. In other words, our going, our participation in the Great Commission, is under the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself
 - a. It is not based on our own thoughts, ideas, or strategies
 - b. It is rooted in the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - c. It is rooted in the power of the Spirit of Christ
 - d. It is rooted in our identification with Christ
 - 3. And our going – our participation in the Great Commission – involves all that we do to further the making of disciples of all nations
 - a. Not just going – for most of us are past the actual going
 - b. But praying
 - c. And especially giving
- F. But it also involves how we take the gospel to others who are close to home
 - 1. One of the places in scripture the Great Commission is stated is just prior to Jesus being taken up into heaven – His ascension
 - a. And that place is found in Acts 1.8
 - 2. Acts 1:8 (ESV) —
 - a. 8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,
 - b. and you will be my witnesses

- c. in Jerusalem
 - d. and in all Judea and Samaria,
 - e. and to the end of the earth.”
 - 3. We often point out the concentric circles of the Great Commission
 - a. Jerusalem – the immediate environs of the fledgling church, the Jewish congregation in Jerusalem
 - b. Judea and Samaria – the surrounding communities and region within the vicinity of Israel-Palestine
 - c. The end of the earth – everywhere else on this planet
 - 4. In Jerusalem it’s called evangelism
 - a. Where we live and share the gospel with our neighbors
 - 5. In Judea and Samaria it’s called church planting
 - a. Where we work with our district and others in the US to establish gospel teaching, disciple-making, Great Commission churches
 - 6. In the end of the earth it’s called missions
 - a. Where we use meaningful gospel presence, ministering to the needs of people especially in hard to reach areas where there is little to no gospel witness
 - b. And establish churches in those areas
- G. And our text in Colossians says, “whatever you do, in word or deed”
 - 1. Our speech and actions encompass our “everything”
 - a. Everything we do in the name of the Lord Jesus
- H. Peter highlights the nature of this gifted ministry that we would expect to see through TVC
 - 1. **1 Peter 4:10–11** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 As each has received a gift,
 - b. use it to serve one another,
 - c. as good stewards of God’s varied grace:
 - d. 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God;
 - e. whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—
 - f. in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.
 - g. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
 - 2. This is an echo of our text in Colossians
 - 3. Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God
 - a. This is “whatever you do, in word”
 - b. In other words, if we are to speak, we speak with the care and power of a prophet
 - 4. Whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies
 - a. This is the “whatever you do... in ... deed”
 - b. And our actions are to be fueled by the power of the Spirit of God
 - 5. In order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ
 - a. This is the “in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”

- I. That's our everything purpose
 1. So what does it mean for us in TVC?
 2. It means that when you speak to your neighbor, you are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus – that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ
 3. It means that when you play pickleball, you are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus
 - a. Yes, pickleball has a purpose
 - b. A gospel purpose
 4. It means that when you play golf, you are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus
 5. It means that when you work in the pottery studio, you are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus
 6. It means that when you go to a concert with friends, you are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus
 7. It means that when you attend a court meeting, you are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him
 8. It means that when you display your photos in the exhibitions, you are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus
 9. It means that when you are sick or declining, and in the Larsen, having a hard time, as you interact with visitors and with the staff, you are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him
 10. It means that when you can't do anything else but pray, you speak to God in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him
 11. It means whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him
- J. Now how is the everything purpose motivated?
 1. How is it to be characterized?
 - a. What drives a life that is captivated by purpose?
 2. We discover that by working backwards in the Colossians text

IV. **The Word-driven Purpose**

- A. **Colossians 3:16** (ESV) —
 1. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
- B. Apart from the Word of God, we don't get very far in our pursuit of a life of purpose
 1. That's why one of the core values of TVC is The Word of God
 2. That's why we teach the Word in practically every ministry we have
 - a. From this pulpit
 - b. To Christian Life Studies – Sunday School
 - c. To Small Groups
 3. That's why we use Study with the Pastor

- a. Where more than a hundred people are studying the same passage of scripture together every day
- C. Because it's not just that we hear the Word from time to time
 - 1. The Word of Christ is to dwell in us richly
 - 2. And that we do it in community
 - a. Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom
 - 3. And it's so ingrained in us, that it becomes our song, the impulse of our worship
 - a. "... singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thanksgiving in your hearts to God"
- D. Our purpose is Word-driven

V. **The Unity of Purpose**

- A. **Colossians 3:14–15** (ESV) —
 - 1. 14 And above all these put on love,
 - 2. which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
 - 3. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
 - 4. to which indeed you were called in one body.
 - 5. And be thankful.
- B. We are in one body in TVC
 - 1. Part, to be sure, of the one body of Christ
 - 2. But there is to be unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (**Ephesians 4.3**)
- C. Again, that's why one of our core values is **The Body of Christ**
 - 1. We value the church
 - a. In its global expression
 - b. And especially in its local expression
 - 2. There are those who say they are Christians but who don't connect with the church
 - a. That's an odd position to take
 - b. Jesus loved the church!
 - c. Why don't you?
- D. Love for one another is what binds everything together (there's that everything word again!) in perfect harmony
 - 1. In which the peace of Christ rules in our hearts
- E. We strive to be a community of purpose
 - 1. And that means to have a unity of purpose

VI. **The Character of Purpose**

- A. Finally, this purpose passage teaches us what character of purpose looks like
 - 1. The text uses the metaphor of clothing to illustrate what the character of purpose looks like
 - a. What kind of behavior and conduct befits the Christian
- B. The previous section of this passage talks a lot about putting off certain kinds of clothes
 - 1. The clothing that detracts of Christian character

- a. The clothing to undermines what it means to be a community of purpose in Jesus Christ
 - 2. **Colossians 3:8–10** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.
 - b. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices
 - c. 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.
- C. So the text beginning in v. 12 changes gears and tells what the new self looks like
 - 1. What Christian character befits a life of purpose in Jesus Christ
- D. **Colossians 3:12–14** (ESV) —
 - 1. 12 Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,
 - 2. 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
 - 3. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
 - 4. [We already described v. 14 when we looked at Unity of Purpose – binding everything together in harmony; but we include it here because it continues to “putting on” metaphor]
- E. **Put on**
 - 1. **Compassionate hearts**
 - a. Caring about one another
 - b. Caring about others in the community
 - 2. **Kindness**
 - a. Acting on our compassion
 - b. Whenever we’re able, doing something practical – in word or deed – for someone else
 - 3. **Humility**
 - a. Always holding others in higher value than ourselves
 - 4. **Meekness**
 - a. Not seeking to press our own agendas on others
 - 5. **Patience**, and bearing with one another
 - a. Recognizing that everyone else is on a journey just as we are
 - b. And that we accord the same kind of grace God has given to us
 - 6. **Love**
 - a. Acting in the interests of others before ourselves
- F. Remember Jesus’ teaching in John 13
 - 1. **John 13:34–35** (ESV) —
 - a. 34 “A new commandment I give to you,
 - b. that you love one another:
 - c. just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

- d. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- 2. If you love – they’ll know you’re Jesus’ disciples
 - a. They’ll know you’re acting in His name
 - b. They’ll know you’re His witnesses
- 3. That’s what Francis Schaeffer called “The Mark of the Christian”
 - a. The uniform of the Christian
- G. Put it all together
 - 1. **The Character of Purpose**
 - a. **Colossians 3:12–13** (ESV) — 12 Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
 - 2. **The Unity of Purpose**
 - a. **Colossians 3:14–15** (ESV) — 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.
 - 3. **Word-driven Purpose**
 - a. **Colossians 3:16** (ESV) — 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
 - 4. **The Everything Purpose**
 - a. **Colossians 3:17** (ESV) — 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

VII. **Purpose-driven Values**

- A. Purpose is the centerpiece of the mission statement of TVC
 - 1. **We are building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ**
- B. And all of our core values feed what it means to be a people of purpose in TVC
- C. **We value the Glory of God**
 - 1. “... giving thanks to God the Father through him”
- D. **We value the Word of God**
 - 1. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”
- E. **We value the Sufficiency of Christ**
 - 1. “... do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus”
- F. **We value the Ministry of the Holy Spirit**
 - 1. “... let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...”
 - 2. “... let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...”
 - 3. Nothing can happen in the heart of the believer apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit

- G. **We value the Great Commission of Christ**
 - 1. The “whatever you do” is intimately connected with the overarching purpose for the church of making disciples of all nations
 - 2. Teaching them to obey all the commands – especially these purpose-driving commands in Colossians
- H. **We value the Body of Christ**
 - 1. “... to which indeed you were called in one body...”
- I. **We value Prayer**
 - 1. “... giving thanks to God the Father through him”
- J. All of the core values are purpose-driven values
 - 1. All of these values feed our desire and capacity to be a community of purpose

VIII. **Purpose for Everyone**

- A. There is to be no one left out in a purpose-driven community
- B. The way we express purpose in Jesus Christ will change through the seasons of life
 - 1. But no one is left out
 - 2. As one friend put it, “If you’re not dead you’re not done”
- C. When we were in our church in Morgantown, WV, there was a lady, a believer, in that church who had married a Jewish man
 - 1. She was a Christian when she married him; he was not
 - a. He was a good man in many respects
 - b. He was not a believer
 - 2. For many years she prayed for him
 - a. And while he was befriended by a number of people in the church over the years, he would not believe
 - b. But she was faithful to him
 - 3. Eventually, the man, near the end of his life, came to faith in Jesus
 - a. Certainly, the persistent prayers of this dear lady were instrumental in the process
 - b. I’m sure the friendship of church people were important in his coming to Christ
 - c. Ultimately, the call of God, the Spirit of God, transformed his heart
 - d. And he began to love Jesus
 - 4. Unfortunately, this all came at a time when he was declining in health
 - a. And he spent a good bit of that time in the hospital
 - b. Bed-ridden
 - 5. What kind of purpose did he have?
 - a. What could he do “in the name of the Lord Jesus?”
 - 6. Well, he had a list
 - a. A list of people
 - b. I was on that list
 - c. Many others were on that list
 - d. And he prayed for everyone on that list

- e. Daily
- 7. His Christian life was a life of purpose
 - a. His was a community of purpose
 - b. For even when he didn't see very many people – he touched them by his praying for them
- D. More recently was Jean's mother
 - 1. She was always a woman of purpose
 - a. She used her gifts in the church
 - b. She used her gifts of helps in the community
 - c. She visited the sick
 - d. She entertained guests
 - e. She was a doer
 - 2. But in the last several years, she lost much of her capacity
 - a. She could no longer help others
 - b. Eventually, she couldn't even help herself much
 - c. She had to rely on others helping her
 - d. It was very demoralizing and discouraging
 - 3. But when she was living with us, we had a service assist her in the home
 - a. One of the young women who came was an African-American woman
 - b. She was working as a CNA, but trying to go back to school to eventually get a nursing education
 - c. But she was also a young woman who hadn't always made good choices
 - d. Some of the struggles she faced were ones she brought on herself
 - 4. One of Jane's special gifts was that she was opinionated
 - a. I'll let you decide if you think it was a spiritual gift...
 - b. But when this young lady shared about her experiences, Jane would speak her mind
 - c. She would tell her the truth about life – even when it was hard
 - d. Even more, Jane would share her own life with her
 - e. Shared what she had been through over the years
 - f. What she had learned about life, sometimes the hard way
 - 5. And you know, Jane changed that young woman's life
 - a. And that girl, even after she left that service, and after Jane had to go into Larsen – she would come and visit Jane
 - b. She loved Jane
 - c. Because Jane – even in those last months – had a life of purpose
- E. No one is left out of a life of purpose
- F. How do you find your purpose at TVC?
 - 1. **Romans 12:1–2** (ESV) —
 - a. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

- b. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,
 - c. that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - 2. Give yourself to God – as a living sacrifice
 - 3. And then be transformed by the renewing of your mind – through the Word of God
 - 4. And then you will be able to discern the will of God for you
 - G. That's how you find your purpose at TVC
 - 1. That's how you become part of a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ