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Good News! | Living on Purpose

Kyle Riley | Philippians 1:20-25, 29-30

Alright, Traders Point online, welcome. My name is Kyle. I have the privilege of being one of the pastors around here. And if this is your first time joining us, man we are so glad that you are with us today.

Right now, we are in a series called *Good News*. Good News. All of us are familiar with some good news and we love it, don’t we? We love giving it and we love getting it. So much so that when good news is coupled with not so good news—if someone asks us, “Hey, do you want the bad news first or the good news first?” if you are a normal, sane human being you’re going to say, I want the bad news first.” Why? Because we want to leave on something exciting, we want to leave on a high note—feeling hopeful.

And what is even better is unexpected good news. All of us love us some unexpected good news.

Like, I remember in middle school and high school walking into class and to your surprise and my surprise we would find, instead of our normal teacher being there, there would be a substitute teacher there that day. Now, that was good news in and of itself, but let us be watching a movie that day—that was an even better amount of good news. That meant that we could relax because we didn’t have to do any work. We could just kick our feet back. That was good news.

Now, students, I don’t know what watching movies in class looks like for you today, but I can kind of just imagine what that might look like. I imagine the substitute teacher turning on the built-in smart TV with a click of a button or a touch of the screen, he is selecting a documentary and voila, you’re on your way—easy peasy.

But back in my day? Oh man, it took some work. It wasn’t just pushing a button. No, the teacher was actually pushing something else. They were pushing a cart into the classroom—you may remember this if you are my age—they would push a cart into the classroom.

And attached to this cart would be an actual tube TV with straps coming down, it was strapped to the cart so that the TV wouldn’t fall off of the cart. Maybe if you don’t know what I’m talking about, you can google it. I’m sure that there are some images out there somewhere.

But it got even better because it wasn’t just pushing a button on the TV and going, there was actually this box that was attached to the TV. And we called this box a VCR, you can probably google that as well if you’re not familiar with it. Then, you actually had to put the movie into the VCR. We called that a VHS.

Listen. If you remember the days, the glory days, of tube TVs and VCRs and VHSs make some noise in the chat right now. Maybe you could just put in the chat, “I remember” with an exclamation point if you’re feeling a little funky.

But, regardless, substitute teachers were the best. It was good news once you walked into that class. But it was momentary good news because it was short-lived. It only lasted for that hour then you were on to the next class and reality would set in.

And all of us can relate to momentary good news. I mean, think about the time maybe when you got the approval for the mortgage loan. That’s good news. When you got word that you had just closed with that potential client, it’s good news. When you got that email from your boss announcing that you had been promoted, it’s good news.

As a parent, when your child came home letting you know they actually got a B+ in that difficult class, when you know good and well that you were praying to God that they would just scrape by with a C and you’d be okay, that was good news.

We love good news and we celebrate, but that celebration often comes with an expiration. It’s short-lived. But the Good News that we have been talking about in this series doesn’t last for a day, it doesn’t last for a week, it doesn’t even last for a year. This is Good News that changes our lives forever.

And to better understand this Good News and to respond to this Good News we’ve been looking at a letter in the Bible called Philippians. And Philippians is a little letter written by a guy named Paul. And as Ryan explained last week, Paul is actually in jail as he is writing this letter to the Philippians.

This wouldn’t have been a jail that looks like our modern-day prisons, alright? It’s not like Paul had an hour to go outside and do rec time every day. It’s not like had a TV in his cell where he could just watch his favorite TV shows. No, my man was literally in chains.

Picture this with me. Paul is in physical chains and with the help of one of his trusted companions, he’s writing this letter to a church that he helped start years ago in a city called Philippi—hence the name Philippians.

And what’s unique about this is that while Paul finds himself in this situation that many would consider bad, the Good News that he continues to express is good. The news that he continues to talk about is good, despite his bad situation. And it’s good to the people who are around him in prison, but it’s also Good News to the people he is writing to.

So that’s what I want us to look at today. I want us to pick up in Philippians, chapter 1 and we’re going to be in verse 20. So if you have a Bible or a Bible app go ahead and turn there with me. And what I want us to notice is that there is this level of confidence that Paul has as we look at this passage today. Paul has this unique amount boldness and he says that he is unashamed, and we’ll get to dive into that. Let’s look at Philippians, chapter 1 starting in verse 20.

It says this. It says, *For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die.*

You see. In this moment, as Paul is writing this, he’s actually waiting for his trial. As we know, he’s in prison, he’s been arrested in Rome and he’s waiting for his trial. He’s waiting when he would either be convicted and executed, or he will be found innocent and he will be released.

What we see here is this incredible disposition that Paul has and he’s saying, “Hey, no matter what happens to me, whether I’m convicted, or I’m let go, I will never be ashamed of Jesus.” It’s remarkable. “Regardless of what happens, I’m going to bring honor to Christ, my life is going to bring honor to Jesus.”

But as I continued to read this and study this this week, there was one particular question that continued to pop into my mind that I could not just let go. And I think it’s a timely and helpful question that all of us may be connecting the dots—not just as we read this passage, but as we read Scripture in general. And it’s a profound question that I’m going to share with you. Are you ready for it? Here’s the question:

Why?

Why? And I know that this may be a little new for you. Maybe you’re not used to a pastor sitting up here giving you permission to ask questions in church or telling you to interrogate what you’re reading in the Bible, but I would let everybody know that, if we could adopt this approach to the Bible, this child-like curiosity, where we are just questioning and wondering and asking God why he let this happen and why certain things happen why certain people had these mentalities—I think that would give us this desire to pursue Jesus like nothing else. But then the questions still remains: Why?

Why was Paul so unashamed? Why was Paul so bold? Why was Paul so mission focused about this Good News when everything around him was not good. I think what we need to understand is something that is much deeper than we realize. It’s not because it was just part of Paul’s personality. It’s not like Paul was a seven on the Enneagram. It’s not like he was this glass half full kind of guy. It was something deeper.

And I think for many of us, many of us who may know Paul and some of the other apostles within the New Testament, I think we have this tendency to normalize their boldness. Like, I think that we have this tendency to relegate their confidence to that particular time period, that context, and to those people.

But I think that it is super critical that we understand this: Paul was bold because he was rooted in something and in someone much bigger than himself. And it began the moment Paul actually experienced and received this Good News first hand. When he first encountered this Good News that’s when it happened, that’s when he started to realize that he was supposed to live for something and someone bigger than himself.

We actually have an account of this encounter and this moment where Paul first heard this Good News. It’s in Acts, chapter 9. If you have time this week, maybe you go and read about this account, but it actually gives us a picture of what that was like.

Paul was a religious leader who was actually trying to do everything that he could to stop Christianity from spreading. He was on the other side of this movement. He hated Christians. And he was persecuting the very people who were boldly proclaiming the Good News of Jesus.

So, in the process of that, Paul has this incredible encounter. He comes face to face with Jesus. His name was actually Saul at the time. And what happens is that Jesus encounters Saul and he temporarily blinds him.

But then Jesus approaches this other guy name Ananias and Ananias is a follower of Jesus. And he says, “Hey Ananias, I want to go, and I want you to minister to Paul. I want you to lay hands on him. I want you to heal him.“

Ananias had gotten word about Paul. He knew very well who Saul was. So, “Saul. Like the very person, God, who is persecuting Christians—that’s who you want me to go and lay hands on?” And so you can tell Ananias is a little reluctant to do so. So after some back and forth, this is what God tells Ananias. Let’s look at what he tells him. Acts, chapter 9, verse 15.

He says, *But the Lord said, “Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel.  And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake.”*

And it’s this very declaration that Paul holds onto. He never forgets that. He is God’s chosen instrument to bring the Good News of Jesus to lost people. He’s remembering it as he’s sitting in this Roman prison writing to his friends in Philippi. He’s remembering it as he is waiting for his verdict. He’s grasping ahold of this life changing truth that has given him something to live for.

And this is why Paul says that he will never be ashamed. It’s because of this truth that he encountered. It’s because his shame isn’t defined by his failure to live to human standards. Instead he has this confidence that has stemmed from the very One who has created him. Paul doesn’t have to worry about getting the approval of the court judge when he goes to trial, because he already has the approval of the Supreme Judge in heaven.

And if there is anything that we can take away from this particular passage, it’s this:

Who you are determines who you live for.

Who you are determines who you live for. And I want to just take a moment to unpack that for a second, because I think it is so imperative for us to understand it in order for us to live out this Good News.

So I want to ask a question that can help frame our mind around what it is that I just said. When you look in the mirror, what is the first thing that comes to mind about your identity? What is the first thing that you notice when you look in that mirror, according to who you are, according to your identity? And for many of us there are various answers that come to mind as we look into that mirror.

For some of you, when you look in that mirror the first thing that you notice is that you are your parents’ child. You are your parents’ child. So as a result you spend your time trying to live up to their expectations.

For some of you, the first thing that you notice when you look in mirror is the title signature of your email—you know, your profession, your career. So as a result you find your value in trying to please your boss, or trying to climb the corporate ladder.

For some of you, when you look in the mirror the first thing that you notice is your role as a mom or a dad. And that is a noble role. That is probably one of the most important roles that you can have in life. But, if we’re honest, sometimes, if that is our primary identity that it comes with some shame the moment we feel like we’re not living up to our parental standards or that whatever we do doesn’t seem to be able to please our children.

There are so many things that we wrestle with when it comes to our identity. There are so many things that can unknowingly position themselves as primary in our identities. And as a result we exhaust ourselves trying to bring honor to the things that they are connected to. We find ourselves on this never-ending hamster wheel. And that’s where the shame sets in.

If we aren’t careful, we allow society to give us an identity that God never called us to live from or live for. And what Paul beautifully reminds us of in Philippians is that the Good News of Jesus offers us an identity that is eternal, and we don’t ever have to be ashamed of him because he isn’t ashamed of us.

You can be anchored in who God says you are. And I want to tell you who God says you are. He says that you are a loved child of God who he created and he died for. And once you are anchored in this truth, once you are anchored in that identity, you can begin to live a life that is unapologetically, unashamed of Jesus.

So maybe now you’re sitting there saying, “Alright, Kyle. I get it. Great. Thank you for breaking that down for me. I understand that the Good News gives us and shapes our identity, and it gives us something to live for. But what does that look like?” What does it look like for us to be unashamed and to live for Jesus? Well, all we have to do is continue reading, because Paul is going to give us some insight into exactly what this looks like. Look at what he says starting in verse 21.

He says, *For to me,* ***living means living for Christ, and dying is even better****. But if I live, I can do more* ***fruitful work*** *for Christ. So I really don’t know which is better. I’m torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me.  But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.*

Paul says living means living for Christ and dying is even better. Some translations would say that to live is Christ and to die is gain. That’s a pretty popular Scripture that a lot of us are familiar with. He says to live is Christ to die is gain. To die is gain. What? “What are you talking about, Paul? To die is gain. How could you say something like that?”

It’s incredible because what Paul is saying that the thing that many people fear the most, the thing that we spend our lives trying to avoid, is actually something that he looks forward to. How is that?

Now, I think I have to take a moment to actually explain and be clear about what Paul is not saying. Paul is not saying that he has some kind of death wish. Paul is not saying that he wishes he were dead. He’s not saying that life would be better off if he weren’t alive.

And I think I need to take a moment to be serious for a second, because somebody needs to hear this. You need to hear that God has a purpose and a plan for your life. You need to hear and know that Jesus loves you, unconditionally.

You need to know that no matter how dark it may appear right now with what you’re going through, no matter how much things around you seem to be falling apart, no matter how much you’re wrestling with depression and anxiety—I know that those are very real things—but you need to know that taking your life is never the answer.

I think someone needs to know right now that if that is you, I encourage you to reach out to somebody you know, somebody you trust. And if you don’t have anybody you can reach out to here’s a number, right here on the screen that you can call. There will be somebody who would love to talk with you, because you need to know that you are loved, you need to know that you matter, and you need to know that you are not alone.

1-800-273-8255

So, what Paul isn’t saying is that he wished death upon himself, what he is saying is this. He’s saying, “Hey, even if this doesn’t work out, even if I am convicted and I am executed, it’s still going to be a win. And here’s why. Here’s how it’s going to be a win. One, because if I’m executed and if I die, I’ll get to go and be with Jesus. And there’s nothing better than that. I’ll be able to see him, to stand before him, face to face. I’ll be with my creator and my Savior. And, two, I want to have died doing the very thing that God called me to do.”

Could you imagine how frustrating this would have been for the people overseeing Paul? It’s like, if they kill him, he’s happy because that means that he gets to go and be with Jesus. If they let him live, he’s happy because that means he gets to go on preaching the Good News about Jesus. If they make him suffer, he’s happy because he’s happy to suffer in the name of Jesus, which he is not ashamed of.

This is what is so phenomenal, what is so incredible about Christianity. It’s because this is what made us so unstoppable. There have always been people who are living on mission and on fire for Jesus and couldn’t be stopped because they were living for something much bigger and better and beyond themselves, no matter what happened. And when people tried to stamp it out, it just grew. This is why we are here today.

So what Paul does say is that dying is better, he also says this, “Living is living for Christ. We better just leave it as that,” which is what I love. He describes what this entails. This is what I want us to pick up on. He says, “If I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ.”

Do you want to know what it means to live for Jesus? It’s to live doing fruitful work for Christ by fulfilling the Great Commission that he has given us in Matthew 28, to go and to make disciples. This is what each and every one of us have been called to do. This is why we celebrate so much around here when people get baptized and then they get into groups, because not only has their eternity changed, but they have answered the call to join Jesus on mission and going and making a difference.

That’s why we say around here that baptism is not the finish line, it’s the starting point. And each and every one of us have been called to join him on mission, to take this Good News to people who need it.

And this is exactly why Paul says it’s best for him to stay alive. Look at what he goes on to say in verse 25. He says, *Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive* ***so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith****.*

Paul had this deep desire to help people know Jesus and help them grow to experience the joy of their faith. So then, my question is: What would it look like for us to live out what Paul is talking about? What would it look like for us to actually help people grow and experience the joy of their faith? Because that’s exactly what each and every one of us have been called to.

I think it would require of us understanding three important truths that I want to share with you today. These are three truths that you can take with you, if you’re watching you can take a picture of them or write them down in your notes, because they are going to help us to actually live on purpose.

So here’s the first truth that I want to share with you. You need to know this:

Jesus died to save you on purpose, for a purpose.

Jesus died to save you on purpose, for a purpose. Listen to me. You are not here by accident. You need to understand and know that you were not chosen by chance, but you were picked on purpose. When Jesus went to that cross, he saw you sin and all. And in your sin, he died to save you from the penalty of that sin, and he died to redeem you from it. And that’s good news. That’s the Good News we get to celebrate.

But it does not just end there. We don’t just get to believe that truth and then kick our feet up and relax and hit the cruise control. No. We have been called to respond to that. To believe it. But also to live for it. That means that we get off of the sidelines and we get into the game, we begin to live on purpose—an eternal purpose.

You know, I’ll never forget what this looked like in my own life. I’ll never forget what it looked like for the Good News to finally start taking root within my soul and begin to change me. I was in college and I was drowning in a sea of brokenness and regret and sin. I was tired. Tired of trying to live up to other people’s expectations, the world’s expectations.

I was tired of trying to medicate my brokenness with more brokenness—pornography and sex and alcohol only to be left empty and wanting and chasing more. Only to be left unfilled, again. I was tired of trying to find my identity in a sport that I played, and making it an idol, then realizing that it was never strong enough to sustain me. I grew tired.

And then I met this person who would become a good friend of mine, and he shared the Good News with me. He shared it in a way that I have never heard before. And it began to change me. I began to realize that I could not just go through the motions. I began to realize that I had to stop living for something that was temporary and start living for something that was eternal. It changed me from the inside out.

And I began to hear God say to me, clear as day, “Kyle, this Good News, this Good News that you’re falling in love with, this Good News that is changing you—it doesn’t just stay with you. There are other people who need it, and I want to use you to tell it to them.”

You want to know what my response was? “Your crazy God. You are crazy. Me? You want to use me? Messed up, jacked up, sinful me?” And God said, “Yeah.” God said, “I have a track record, a history, of using people who feel like they are unqualified.”

So, as I wrestled with that. As I grew, I finally consented. I was like, “Alright, God. I get it. I’ll do it. I will do it. But under one condition, I ain’t about to be no preacher or nothin, alright? You can forget all that.” Clearly God has a sense of humor. But in that moment it wasn’t about preaching, God wasn’t calling me to stand on a stage and to preach. He was calling me to start living on purpose—an eternal purpose.

Which is going to lead me to the second truth that I want to share with you today. This is what it is:

The best way to deepen your relationship with Jesus is to help other people discover theirs.

This is what we have been called to do. This is how we live on purpose. Each and every one of us as followers of Jesus have been called to know God and to make him known to others. And one of the best ways to know him is by introducing him to other people and watching him change their life.

You want to see something powerful? You want to see something that is incredible? You want to watch somebody grow? You want to watch yourself grow in unpredictable ways, ways that you can grow in your faith—introduce somebody to Jesus and watch how he changes his life.

Now you may be sitting there saying, “Well, Kyle. That’s kind of like a lofty task. That’s a little overwhelming, you know, commanding me to go and tell somebody about Jesus. Where do I start? Where do I start?”

And I hear you. It’s a good question. But there’s a simple answer to that. Start where you are. You start right where you are. That fellow mom who you meet with so that your children can have play dates together, you start there. That neighbor that God has divinely placed you to live next door to, you start there. That co-worker in your office, yeah, the one who you can’t stand, you start there.

And you pray. You pray and ask, “God would you reveal the people who are already in my life who I can begin building a relationship with and help them build a relationship with you?” You pray this prayer, “God would you send people my way who need you?” That is a prayer that God will respond to every single time, because you want to find somebody who needs the Good News, you want to find somebody who needs encouragement and a hope, you just need to find somebody who is breathing.

And you don’t have to have everything figured out. You don’t have to know the whole Bible. You don’t have to know all of Scripture. You just need to know what Jesus has done for you. There is nothing better that you can give somebody than your own story, your own testimony. You can sit with them and talk to them.

You can say plain as day, “Hey, I don’t have everything figured out. I don’t have all of the answers. But I know one thing, Jesus has saved me and he is changing me. I know one thing; this is who I was, and this is who I’m becoming.” It’s the most powerful thing that you can give someone. It’s tangible evidence of Jesus.

The next thing that you may be thinking is, “Well, I’m not ready. I’m not ready to do that, Kyle.” And I hear you. But can I just tell you that the Bible is filled with people who felt like they weren’t ready? The disciples, themselves, felt like they weren’t ready.

And Jesus would tell them phenomenal things like this, because they would ask, “Jesus, what are we supposed to say when we stand before people? What do we tell them? What do we do?” He said, “I will be with you.” He said, “My Spirit will live within you and he will give you everything that you need to say in that hour. My Spirit,” the same Spirit that lives in all of us, “he will guide you. He will convict you. He will help you.” That’s why he is called the helper.

And so you pray. You pray that as you introduce people to Jesus that God will give you the boldness to do it, but then the boldness to walk along side of them. And then you watch as God begins to give them new passions and new desires, as he changes their identity, he gives them purpose, and gives them new passions to live for.

And then, here’s the third thing, which is probably the most important thing for us to take away, because what this is is not just another message about evangelism. It’s important for us to understand this:

The Good News isn’t just a story to be told. It’s a truth to be lived.

The Good News is not a story to be told, it’s not just a story to be shared. It is a truth to be lived. The Good News that we have been talking about, it is more than lip service. It’s life service. It’s modeling a life of love and compassion before others every single day that we walk out of our front doors and the moment that we come back in them.

It’s a truth we passionately live with in a world that is desperately looking for hope. It’s a truth to be lived every day. It’s a truth we live when we feel like and when we don’t. It’s a truth to be lived when we’re single and within our marriages. It’s a truth we live when we are walking in victory and when our flesh tempts us with sinful desires. It’s a truth we live when things are going well and when they aren’t—when life is great and when we’re suffering.

In fact, Paul goes on to say that the Good News requires suffering. It comes with suffering. Look at what he says in verse 29. He says this, *For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the* ***privilege of suffering for him****.*

And I know most of us, when we think about following Jesus and placing our trust in Jesus, we don’t think about suffering for him. We definitely don’t consider it a privilege to suffer for him. We need to understand this. It is only a privilege when we understand that every circumstance is an opportunity to point people to Jesus.

Every circumstance good and bad is an opportunity to point people to Jesus—an opportunity to live out this Good News that there is something beyond this present life, something eternal that we have to look forward to. And even more, we can take comfort in the fact that we know that we don’t have to suffer alone.

We can suffer alongside other believers, because here’s something that is remarkably true. The Good News does not promise a life without suffering, but it does promise that you don’t have to suffer alone. Responding to the Good News places us in community. Community just like the one Paul is writing to in this letter. Community just like here at Traders Point. A community that is willing to walk alongside you to share in your suffering. And it’s a beautiful thing, because it reminds us that we are not on this walk alone.

Paul actually goes on to say it in verse 30, “We’re in this together.” That’s exactly why the church exists. And it’s a beautiful thing. And church, I just want to encourage you, if you call Traders Point home, would you just be bold enough to put, right now in the chat, some encouraging words for somebody who needs to hear them right now.

Maybe you could just say, say this right here, “We’re here for you.” We are here for you because there is somebody watching this right now, somebody who has tuned into this chat who feels alone, somebody who is tuning in right now who is suffering. Somebody who needs to know that they are not alone, and that there are people who are considering them, who are praying for them, who are willing to love them.

The church is here for you. But even better, not only is the church here for you through your suffering, but Jesus is here for you. And there is no better person that we would rather have with us through our suffering than Jesus, because he knows what it is like, first hand, to suffer.

And do you know what it was to him? Do you know what he considered it when he suffered? He considered it a privilege. He willingly went to that cross, seeing you, seeing all of us in our sin and in our shame. And he willingly obeyed his father and he suffered and he considered it a privilege. He considered it a privilege to suffer because it meant that you and I could spend eternity with him as a result. And *that* is Good News.

Let me pray for us.

God, thank you. God, thank you for the Good News that we are getting to see and to be reminded of. God, thank you for this Good News that you have drawn near to us, that you are with us, the Good News that you have gone to the cross to pay the price on our behalf, that would free us from sin and shame, that defeated death, that redeems us and frees us from the penalty of that sin, that frees us from eternal separation from you.

But it doesn’t just stay there, God. We thank you that we get a chance to respond to that Good News, that we don’t have to do anything to earn your approval, we just have to rest in who you are and what you have done on that cross. And as we respond to that, we get you, and then you begin to set us on mission.

You first change our identities, God. You give us something eternal to live from and that is as children of God. And then you set us on mission to take this Good News, this Good News that continues to change us from the inside out and you send us to give it to other people. And then you allow us to suffer in the process, because it keeps us dependent upon you, it keeps us reliant on you and that is how our faith grows.

So, God, I pray. I pray for everybody watching this today that they would be reminded that this Good News doesn’t just stay with us, but that we’ve been called to live on mission and to take it to people who need it. Would you empower us, embolden us, as we do so? We thank you and we love you. It’s in Jesus’ name that we pray. Amen.