

**THE CARPENTER SERIES**  
**301 - BUILDING YOUR *MINISTRY***  
Lesson 14 – Life Experiences

**Building Our Lives to be More Like Jesus**

And He was:

- Connected to God,
- Connected to People, and
- Connected to His Calling

and so should we be.

*Ephesians 2:10* For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

You were created on purpose, for purpose by God.

God has uniquely designed you for a purpose and has given you your personality, spiritual gifts, strengths, and life experiences to help you fulfill His purpose.

*Romans 8:28 (NASB)* And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Not that all things are good, but all things \_\_\_\_\_ for good. God uses them for His glory.

*Genesis 50:20* But as for you, you **meant evil against me; but God meant it for good**, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Joseph was not \_\_\_\_\_ but was \_\_\_\_\_ because of what he went through, even though it was hard.

Tough \_\_\_\_\_ don't last – tough \_\_\_\_\_ do!

**Types of Life Experiences:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Experiences

*1 Samuel 3:1-11, 20-21* Then the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation. <sup>2</sup>And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, <sup>3</sup>and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the Lord where the ark of God was, and while Samuel was lying down, <sup>4</sup>that the **Lord called Samuel**. And he answered, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup>So he ran to Eli and said, "**Here I am**, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down. <sup>6</sup>Then the **Lord called yet again**, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "**Here I am**, for you called me." He answered, "I

Except where noted, the Scriptures are from the New King James Version.

did not call, my son; lie down again.”<sup>7</sup> **(Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.)**<sup>8</sup> And the Lord called **Samuel again the ③third time**. Then he arose and went to Eli, and said, **“Here I am, for you did call me.”** Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the boy.<sup>9</sup> Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, ‘Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.<sup>10</sup> Now the Lord came and stood and called as at **④other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”** And **Samuel answered, “Speak, for Your servant hears.”**<sup>11</sup> Then the Lord said to Samuel: “Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. . . .<sup>20</sup> And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that **Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord.**<sup>21</sup> Then the Lord appeared again in Shiloh. For the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

**Acts 9:1-18** Then **Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,** went to the high priest<sup>2</sup> and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> As he journeyed he came near **Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.**<sup>4</sup> Then **he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”**<sup>5</sup> And he said, **“Who are You, Lord?”** Then **the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”**<sup>6</sup> So he, trembling and astonished, said, **“Lord, what do You want me to do?”** Then the Lord said to him, **“Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”**<sup>7</sup> And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.<sup>8</sup> Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.<sup>9</sup> **And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.**<sup>10</sup> **Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias;** and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”<sup>11</sup> So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.<sup>12</sup> And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”<sup>13</sup> Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.”<sup>15</sup> **But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.**<sup>16</sup> For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”<sup>17</sup> And **Ananias** went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, **“Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”**<sup>18</sup> **Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.**

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Experiences

**Acts 26:4-5** My manner of life from my **youth**, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know.<sup>5</sup> They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the **strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.**

**Acts 22:3** I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but **brought up** in this city **at the feet of Gamaliel, taught** according to the **strictness of our fathers’ law**, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.

## 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Experiences

No pain – no \_\_\_\_\_.

God uses painful experiences most to prepare you for ministry. God never \_\_\_\_\_ a hurt! Sometimes, your greatest ministry will come out of your greatest hurt. God intentionally allows you to go through painful experiences to equip you for \_\_\_\_\_ to others.

For God to use your painful experiences, you must be willing to \_\_\_\_\_ them.

You have to stop covering them up and you must honestly admit your faults, failures, and fears. People are always more encouraged when we share how God's \_\_\_\_\_ helped us in our weaknesses, troubles, and difficulties rather than when we \_\_\_\_\_ about our strengths.

*2 Corinthians 1:8-10 (TLB)* I think you ought to know, dear brothers, about **the hard time we went through in Asia**. We were really **crushed and overwhelmed**, and **feared we would never live through it**. <sup>9</sup>We felt we were **doomed to die** and saw how **powerless** we were to help ourselves; **but that was good**, for then we **put everything into the hands of God**, who alone could save us, for he can even raise the dead. <sup>10</sup>**And he did help us** and saved us from a terrible death; yes, and we expect him to do it again and again.

Experience is not what happens to you. It is what you \_\_\_\_\_ with what happens to you – what you learned from it and how you grew through it. What will you do with what you've been through? Don't waste your pain; use it to \_\_\_\_\_ others.

*2 Corinthians 1:3-4* Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all **comfort**, <sup>4</sup>who **comforts** us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to **comfort** those who are in any **trouble**, with the **comfort** with which we ourselves are **comforted** by God.

*Hebrews 2:17-18* Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>**For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**

#### 4. Experiences of \_\_\_\_\_

*Matthew 26:69-75* Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." <sup>70</sup>**But he denied it** before them all, saying, "**I do not know what you are saying.**" <sup>71</sup>And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth." <sup>72</sup>**But again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the Man!"** <sup>73</sup>And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you." <sup>74</sup>Then **he began to curse and swear**, saying, "**I do not know the Man!**" Immediately a rooster crowed. <sup>75</sup>And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, **you will deny Me three times.**" So he went out and **wept bitterly**.

*Acts 2:36* Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Peter denied Christ three times. But He \_\_\_\_\_ with the failure and went on to minister powerfully. Have you ever failed Christ? How did you respond?

When a failure happens in your life, remember that a failure is an \_\_\_\_\_, not a person. You are not a failure! You just failed.

Sin is failure but failure is not sin; failure is not \_\_\_\_\_. Failure proclaims attempt and effort which are prerequisites to \_\_\_\_\_.

If you're too afraid of failing, then you haven't failed \_\_\_\_\_. Take more \_\_\_\_\_: growth comes from failing forward!

5. \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ Experiences

*Genesis 32:28 (NIV)* Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have **struggled** (or wrestled) with God and with men and have **overcome**."

What makes you successful is finding the \_\_\_\_\_ of God and doing it.

Successful experiences are evaluated by \_\_\_\_\_ determination of success not \_\_\_\_\_.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ Experiences

*Acts 18:1-4* After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup>And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. <sup>3</sup>So, **because he was of the same trade**, he stayed with them and worked; **for by occupation they were tentmakers**. <sup>4</sup>And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

7. \_\_\_\_\_ Experiences

*2 Timothy 1:5* When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your **grandmother** Lois and your **mother** Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

**Steps in Making the Most Out of Your Life Experiences**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ them – be honest and objective.

2. Acknowledge that you \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ down any lessons that you learned.

4. Clean up some things from the past.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ "your story."

Remember, your life experiences don't \_\_\_\_\_ you – they \_\_\_\_\_ you.  
God defines you redemptively in Christ.

## 6. Get God's vision for your life and move towards it.

God gave you personality, spiritual gifts, strengths, and life experiences so you could do what He has called and assigned you to do.

### Accepting Your Assignment

Taken from *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren © 2002 by Rick Warren, Zondervan Publishing

1. **You were put on earth to make a \_\_\_\_\_.**  
You weren't created just to consume resources – to eat, breathe, and take up space. **God designed you to make a difference with your life.** While many best-selling books offer advice on how to “*get*” the most out of life, that's not the reason God made you. **You were created to *add* to life on earth, not just take from it.** God wants you to give something back.
  
2. **You were \_\_\_\_\_ to serve God.**  
The Bible says, “*God has created us for a life of good deeds, which He has already prepared for us to do.*” These “good deeds” are your service. Whenever you serve others in any way, you are actually serving God. What God told Jeremiah is also true for you: “*Before I made you in your mother's womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work.*” You were placed on this planet for a special assignment.
  
3. **You were \_\_\_\_\_ to serve God.**  
The Bible says, “*It is He who saved us and chose us for His holy work, not because we deserved it but because that was His plan.*” God redeemed you so you could do His “holy work.” **You're not saved by service, but you are saved for service.** In God's kingdom, you have a place, a purpose, a role, and a function to fulfill. This gives your life great significance and value.

It cost Jesus His own life to purchase your salvation. The Bible reminds us, “*God paid a great price for you. So use your body to honor God.*” We don't serve God out of guilt or fear or even duty, but out of joy, and deep gratitude for what He's done for us. We owe Him our lives. Through salvation our past has been forgiven, our present is given meaning, and our future is secured. In light of these incredible benefits, Paul concluded, “*Because of God's great mercy . . . offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service.*”

The apostle John taught that our loving service to others shows that we are truly saved. He said, “*Our love for each other proves that we have gone from death to life.*” **If I have no love for others, no desire to serve others, and I'm only**

**concerned about my needs, I should question whether Christ is really in my life.**

A saved heart is one that wants to serve.

Another term for serving God that's misunderstood by most people is the word *ministry*. When most people hear "ministry," they think of pastors, priests, and professional clergy, but God says every member of his family is a minister. In the Bible, the words *servant* and *minister* are synonyms, as are *service* and *ministry*. If you are a Christian, you are a minister, and when you're serving, you're ministering.

When Peter's sick mother-in-law was healed by Jesus, she instantly "*stood up and began to serve Jesus,*" using her new gift of health. This is what we're to do. We are healed to help others. **We are blessed to be a blessing.** We are saved to serve, not to sit around and wait for heaven.

Have you ever wondered why God doesn't just immediately take us to heaven the moment we accept His grace? Why does He leave us in a fallen world? He leaves us here to fulfill His purposes. Once you are saved, God intends to use you for His goals. **God has a *ministry* for you in His church and a *mission* for you in the world.**

#### 4. You are \_\_\_\_\_ to serve God.

Growing up, you may have thought that being "called" by God was something only missionaries, pastors, nuns, and other "full-time" church workers experienced, but the Bible says every Christian is called to service. Your call to salvation included your call to service. They are the same. Regardless of your job or career, you are called to *full-time* Christian service. **A "non-serving Christian" is a contradiction in terms.**

The Bible says, "*He saved us and called us to be His own people, not because of what we have done, but because of His own purpose.*" Peter adds, "*You were chosen to tell about the excellent qualities of God, who called you.*" **Anytime you use your God-given abilities to help others, you are fulfilling your calling.**

The Bible says, "*Now you belong to Him . . . in order that we might be useful in the service of God.*" How much of the time are you being useful in the service of God? In some churches in China, they welcome new believers by saying "Jesus now has a new pair of eyes to see with, new ears to listen with, new hands to help with, and a new heart to love others with."

One reason why you need to be connected to a church family is to fulfill your calling to serve other believers in practical ways. The Bible says, "*All of you together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.*" Your service is desperately needed in the Body of Christ. **Each of us has a role to play, and every role is important. There is no small service to God; it all matters.**

Likewise, there are no insignificant ministries in the church. Some are visible and some are behind the scenes, but all are valuable. Small or hidden ministries often make the biggest difference. In my home, the most important light is not the large chandelier in our dining room but the little night light that keeps me from stubbing my toe when I get up at night. There is no correlation between size and significance. Every ministry matters because we are all dependent on each other to function.

What happens when one part of your body fails to function? You get sick. The rest of your body suffers. Imagine if your liver decided to start living for itself: "I'm tired! I don't want to serve the body anymore! I want a year off just to be fed. I've got to do what's best for me! Let some other part take over." What would happen? Your body would die. Today thousands of local churches are dying because of Christians who are unwilling to serve. They sit on the sidelines as spectators, and the Body suffers.

5. You are \_\_\_\_\_ to serve God.

Jesus was unmistakable: "*Your attitude must be like my own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life.*" **For Christians, service is not optional, something to be tacked onto our schedules if we can spare the time. It is the heart of the Christian life. Jesus came "to serve" and "to give" – and those two verbs should define your life on earth, too.** Mother Teresa once said, "Holy living consists in doing God's work with a smile."

Jesus taught that spiritual maturity is never an end in itself. Maturity is for ministry! We grow up in order to give out. It is not enough to keep learning more and more. We must act on what we know and practice what we claim to believe. *Impression without expression causes depression.* Study without service leads to spiritual stagnation. The old comparison between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea is still true. Galilee is a lake full of life because it takes in water but also gives it out. In contrast, nothing lives in the Dead Sea because, with no outflow, the lake has stagnated.

**Serving is the opposite of our natural inclination. Most of the time we're more interested in "serve us" than service.** We say, "I'm looking for a church that meets my needs and blesses me," not "I'm looking for a place to serve and *be* a blessing." We expect others to serve us, not vice versa. But as we mature in Christ, the focus of our lives should increasingly shift to living a life of service. **The mature follower of Jesus stops asking, "Who's going to meet *my* needs?" and starts asking, "Whose needs can I meet?"** Do you *ever* ask that question?

6. You are \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

At the end of your life on earth, you will stand before God, and He is going to evaluate how well you served others with your life.

The Bible says, ***“Each of us will have to give a personal account to God.”*** Think about the implications of that. One day God will compare how much time and energy we spent on ourselves compared with what we invested in serving others.

At that point, all our excuses for self-centeredness will sound hollow: “I was too busy” or “I had my own goals” or “I was preoccupied with working, having fun, or preparing for retirement.” To all excuses God will respond, “Sorry, wrong answer. I created, saved, and called you and commanded you to live a life of service. *What part did you not understand?*” The Bible warns unbelievers, *“He will pour out His anger and wrath on those who live for themselves,”* but for Christians it will mean a loss of eternal rewards.

We are only fully alive when we’re helping others. Jesus said, *“If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live.”* This truth is so important that it is repeated five times in the Gospels. **If you aren’t serving, you’re just existing, because life is meant for ministry. God wants you to learn to love and serve others unselfishly.**

#### 7. Your \_\_\_\_\_ is in God.

You are going to give your life for something. What will it be – a career, a sport, a hobby, fame, wealth? None of these will have lasting significance. Service is the pathway to real significance. It is through ministry that we discover the meaning of our lives. The Bible says, *“Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of His body.”* As we serve together in God’s family, our lives take on eternal importance. Paul said, *“I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. . . because of what you are a part of.”*

God wants to use you to make a difference in His world. He wants to work through you. **What matters is not the *duration* of your life, but the *donation* of it. Not *how long* you lived, but *how well* you lived.**

If you’re not involved in any service or ministry, what excuse have you been using? Abraham was old, Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered, Gideon was poor, Samson was codependent, Rahab was immoral, David had an affair and all kinds of family problems, Elijah was suicidal, Jeremiah was depressed, Jonah was reluctant, Naomi was a widow, John the Baptist was eccentric, to say the least, Peter was impulsive and hot-tempered, Martha worried a lot, the Samaritan woman had several failed marriages, Zacchaeus was unpopular, Thomas had doubts, Paul had poor health, and Timothy was timid. That is quite a variety of misfits, but God used each of them in his service. He will use you, too, if you stop making excuses.



Point to Ponder: Service is not optional

Verse to Remember:

*Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)* For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

**Question to Consider: What is holding me back from accepting God's call to serve Him?**

### **Conclusion**

Before architects design any new building they first ask, "What will be its purpose? How will it be used?" The intended function always determines the form of the building. Before God \_\_\_\_\_ you, He decided what \_\_\_\_\_ He wanted you to play on earth. He planned exactly how He wanted you to serve Him, and then He shaped you for those tasks with your personality, spiritual gifts, strengths, and life experiences. You are the way you are because you were made for specific ministry. \_\_\_\_\_ it!!!

**301 - BUILDING YOUR *MINISTRY***

**Lesson 14 – Life Experiences**

**Response to Truth**

- 1. \_\_\_\_ I understand that not all of my life’s events are good, but God uses them for my good.
- 2. \_\_\_\_ I understand that I am not to get bitter, but better because of what I go through.
- 3. \_\_\_\_ I understand that God uses painful experiences to prepare me for ministry, and God never wastes a hurt.
- 4. \_\_\_\_ I understand that failure is an event, not my identity, and I do not need to be afraid of failure.
- 5. \_\_\_\_ I understand that what makes me successful is finding the will of God and doing it.
- 6. \_\_\_\_ I understand that my life experiences shape me but do not define me.
- 7. \_\_\_\_ I understand that I was created to serve God.

8. Do you have any questions about this lesson?

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9. What are your overall thoughts about this lesson?

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Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

TA’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_