



# FLOURISHING

## Week of September 3 Flourishing in Purpose<sup>1</sup>

### **Overview:**

This sermon series will center around the idea of *flourishing* in our relationships with God, with others, and ourselves. When we live in *shalom* with one another, we also bring wholeness, peace, and reconciliation to our city and our world. The word *shalom* in the Hebrew bible carries this idea of flourishing – not just living “at peace” with one another but calling out the best in others through ethical economics, education centered on truth, physical health, and creative beauty. We are called to live in such a way that others are drawn into the abundant life that Jesus provides.

### **Group Objectives:**

***Relationships and Life Transformation are the primary purpose of community groups.***

- Reflect on this past Sunday’s message and other devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- To consider how we can break down the boundaries between work and service.

### **DNA statement(s) tie-in:**

- *We are contributors, not consumers.* We do not attend church, we are the Church, and we exist in and for the world.

### **Conversation Starters:**

- What was your first paid job? What was your favorite volunteer position?
- What stood out to you from this week’s sermon?

### **Listening to God**

- Where did you experience God last week? How were you able to join God on mission?

### **Learning from God’s Word: Bible Study Discussion**

*Work means different things to different people: a fulfilling way to spend one’s days, a dreaded obligation, or some combination of the two. And for many, ministry and community service exist in their own spheres, separate from paid employment. This is not how God designed us to live. Work is a gift, an opportunity to join him in promoting the flourishing of creation. Service, both to God and to the world, cannot be separated from our work, and by extension, our purpose.*

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<sup>1</sup> This discussion guide was written by Rachel Vaughn and edited by Dawn Gentry.

- **Read Genesis 1:24-31; 2:8-17.**
  - How is the creation of humanity different from the other animals?
  - What tasks does God give them in 1:28 and 2:15?
    - What does this tell you about life in the garden?
  - How is work described in these passages?
    - In other words, according to these passages, what is humanity's purpose?
- **Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-7**
  - What motivations does Paul ascribe to the church's work, labor, and endurance?
    - Why do our motivations matter?
  - How does the knowledge of their suffering change how you view verse 3?
  - What does it mean to "welcome the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit?" (v. 6) How is this a picture of flourishing?
  - What behavior did the Thessalonians model for other churches?
    - What does this have to do with how they viewed work and purpose?

### **Leaning into Obedience:**

- How do you sense God calling you to respond to this passage?
  - Is there an example to follow? A command to obey?
- How can the group encourage you this week as you respond?
- What is one thing you can change this week to help you approach all your work (paid employment, volunteer, home, ministry) as service to God and others?

### **Prayer Prompts:**

- Invite members of the group to share requests.
- Allow time for silent reflection on the following questions.  
Do I invite God into my work daily? Where can I serve others in my everyday tasks?
- Pray Hebrews 13:20-21 over your group:  
*Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

### **For further study:**

- Amy L. Sherman, *Agents of Flourishing: Pursuing Shalom in Every Corner of Society* (IVP, 2022)
- John Mark Comer, *Garden City: Work, Rest, and the Art of Being Human* (Thomas Nelson, 2017)
- Bible Project Videos:
  - <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/genesis-1/>
  - <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/psalm-8/>
- Bible Project Podcast: <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/two-kinds-work/>