

SEE THE WORLD

PART 2: “TIME”

*NOTE: The following content is a raw transcript and has not been edited for grammar, punctuation, or word usage.*

The question that we've been asking in this series is: What if our heavenly Father felt toward us the way we feel toward our kids or the way that your parents felt towards you when they were trying to open your eyes and get you to see the world the way that they see the world? And apparently, we believe our heavenly Father is exactly that way. He's constantly trying to help us renew our minds to the way the world is. And so, we've been talking about this big idea that when we begin to see as God sees, we will begin to do, or we will be more inclined to do, what God says. When we see as God sees, we are going to be more inclined to do as he says. And as I've mentioned a couple of times, this is a prayer that I have been praying for years, and years, and years, and years, and years. It is just a habit for me to say, "God, help me to see the way you see. Help me to see my family the way you see my family, my relationships the way you see relationships. Help me to see money the way that you see money. Help me to see my potential, my job, everything we do that way. God, I know if I could just catch a glimpse of the way that you see the world, I am sure I would respond appropriately."

This is a powerful, powerful idea, and it's central to those of us who believe in God. And it's certainly central to those of us who believe that Jesus is our Savior. Perhaps seeing is not only believing, but perhaps seeing that becomes believing actually leads to a different kind of behavior. God, help me to see the world the way that you see the world.

Today we're gonna take a slice of the world, and I want us to talk specifically about our time. Because, essentially, your time is your life. If you ask the question, "God help me to see my life the way that you see my life," you're essentially, in many ways, talking about your time, because your time is your life. Your time––you haven't thought about it this way perhaps––is your most valuable asset. It's your most valuable commodity. The most valuable thing you have is your time. In fact, it's so valuable we talk about time like it's money. Think about the words we use that we associate with time that we would normally associate with money. We talk about spending time, we talk about investing time, we talk about wasting time, as if it's really an asset.

And here's an interesting and sad thought as well: At the end of your life and at the end of my life––and because we've been through this, some of us understand this––at the end of our lives, many of us are gonna spend a lot of money trying to buy more time. And if you've ever had a loved one who eventually passed away, and you were there toward the end, and you were in the hospital, and you saw those hospital bills, you went, "Wow, I just spent a lifetime of money trying to buy someone I loved more time." And of course we would do that. Why? Because that's how valuable time is to us. It is more valuable to us than anything else.

The question I wanna ask today and answer today is: How does God see our time? God, help us to see as you see, so we'll do as you say. God, help us to see as you see so that we live lives that are in sync with the way that you made the world to be and the way you made the world to operate. To help us answer that question, I wanna introduce you, or reintroduce you, to someone we are all familiar with, Moses. Because Moses wrote a psalm, which ended up in the Book of Psalms, that helps us understand how time works and how God views time. But before we get into that, I wanna say one thing about Moses, and if you're not a Christian or not a religious person, this is super important. In fact, this might be the most important part of the message.

The reason that Christians take Moses seriously is not because Moses is in the Bible. The reason Christians take Moses seriously is because Jesus talked about Moses. The reason we believe Moses was a historical character and that he did some of the things that the Old Testament claims he did is because Jesus refers to those things. And, as Christians, we just go with whatever Jesus said; in fact, Jesus actually quoted Moses to substantiate some of the things that Jesus taught. When you hear us talk about Moses, it's not because Moses is in the Bible. It's because Jesus believed Moses lived, and we just say, "If Jesus believed it, that settles it for us."

Now, this is why Moses is a great example for us. Moses lived to be 120 years old, and Moses started out his life as a rich, spoiled brat, living and growing up in the household of Pharaoh. Moses grew up in opulence. Moses grew up in wealth. Moses grew up in a world where he could have anything he wanted because he was adopted into Pharaoh's daughter's family. And he was raised like a son or a grandson of the most powerful man in the world. And somewhere along the way––probably as a young man––Moses got a fatal case of purpose. Moses looked at the Hebrew people who were enslaved, and they were suffering. It bothered him, and he thought to himself, "Something needs to be done." And he lived with this incredible tension that we can't even begin to imagine: "Do I stay in my life of ease and comfort? Do I stay, continue to live in this opulence? Do I continue to embrace pleasure, or do I step out of all of that into the unknown and embrace a purpose that has no guaranteed ending?"

Moses did not know the end of Moses' story. Moses did not know how this would turn out. But Moses, as a grown-up, decided, "I'm going to leave the comforts of Egypt and of the palace, and I'm gonna step into a problem that needs to be solved." And he embraced purpose. That is the reason we know the name Moses.

Moses lives to be 120 years old, does extraordinary things, grew up with everything, walked away from everything, and now, in this psalm, he gives us his perspective on life––specifically, his perspective on time.

Pay attention to that person. That is someone who understands time, the connection between time and life, and the connection between time, life, and purpose. Now, Moses wrote so long ago, and the way that he writes is a little bit confusing. So, I'm gonna go ahead and give you the bottom line for what Moses is gonna teach us. And then were gonna look at the text together and see if we can dig it out. But here's Moses' take on time, here's what he's gonna tell us, "Context is everything. Context is everything."

More specifically, "There is no purpose." He's gonna tell us, "There is no purpose apart from context." There is no purpose apart from context to see time correctly, to see your time correctly, to see your life correctly, to see your time as God sees your time. You have to see your time­­––or your life––in its proper context. Let me illustrate it this way: Have you ever opened a drawer at home, pulled something out, and said to your roommate or somebody else in your home, "What is this?" And you pulled something out and had no idea what it was, and they looked at you and said "Oh, that's the... " And suddenly this thing that had no purpose gained purpose because they told you what it was. In fact, I brought an illustration. Does anybody have a drawer or a box at home that looks anything like this?

Right? You have something that looks like this? And you reach in there and ask, "What is this? What is this?" When you pull one of these out of a drawer and hold it up to your roommate, your husband, your wife, or your kids, or you bring all this stuff out of your kids' closet, you say, "What is this?" This is important. This is a purpose question. Here's what you're asking, "Why does this exist? What does this do? Why is this here?" And the answer to all those questions is a context answer. This is so important. The answer to, "What is this? Why is this here? What does this do? What does this go with?" It's all a context question because somebody will look at it and say, "Oh, that's the cord to... " Then, suddenly, this worthless cord takes on purpose because it connects to something else. "Oh, that's the adapter for... " "Oh, that goes with... " And suddenly these worthless wires take on purpose because we know what––don't miss this––we know what they are connected to. We don't know what they are for until we know what they are connected to. We do not know what they are for… We did not know why they are here… We do not know why they are hanging around in our house… until we know what they connect to. This is so important.

Here's what Moses says about this. And this comes from the oldest psalm in all of the Jewish scriptures. It's found in the Book of Psalms, but it's the oldest psalm in all the Jewish scriptures because he wrote this about 1200 to 1300 BC. Here's Moses, stepped into purpose out of opulence. He says, "Hey, if you wanna understand your life, if you wanna understand time, you gotta have context. Because context is what gives us purpose." You don't wanna be an adapter that doesn't have anything to adapt to. Context creates purpose. So here's how he says it, here are his words. In Psalm 90, he says this, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. God, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations." This is like his purpose statement. "God, we live within the context of you. Before the mountains were born, or before you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God."

Now, I just gotta pause a minute and tell you how extraordinary this is. This is the most progressive view of God imaginable––and to think that he wrote this 1200 to 1300 BC. Because in 1200 and 1300 BC, every culture believed in multiple gods, every culture worshipped multiple gods, and Moses says, "No, no, no, no. God is an immaterial, uncreated Creator." God is immaterial. We do not have idols. We do not have representations of our God. Our God is an immaterial, uncreated Creator. I'm telling you, it would be hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds of years before any other civilization caught up with this notion of God. For the next hundreds and hundreds of years––for centuries––every culture worshipped idols, multiple idols. But before all of that, Moses says, "No. There is one God who is immaterial. He is everlasting to everlasting. He is the context for all of creation. He is the context for everything we experience and everything that happens."

Did you get that? Okay. Now, here's what's fabulous. Think of this: Moses is raised in Egypt. He's raised to worship Ra. He's raised to worship the sun. And the interesting thing about the god Ra is that there were two theories about where Ra came from. One was that he was self-created. Now, that is a great trick, because that meant he had to show up right before he became. Think about that. The other theory about Ra was that another god created Ra. In 1200, 1300 BC, Moses recognizes, "No, the Egyptians have it wrong. Everybody has it wrong. There is one God. He's immaterial, everlasting to everlasting, the eternal God."

Now, here's his point in all this: "God's eternal existence is the context for our little, itty-bitty lives. God's eternal existence––everlasting to everlasting, no bookends––is the context for our lives. Whenever you're born, wherever we are born, we are born within the context of the God who got here before us and will be here after we're gone." Then he keeps going, he gets a little bit more practical. "You turn people back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, you mortals.'" This is the most Gandalf-like thing in all of the Bible right here. "Return to dust, you mortals." And then he says this, "One thousand years in your sight is like a day that has just gone by." Or he says, "No, it's not even like a day. It's shorter than that. It's like a watch." And a watch was a period of three hours. He says, "You know what, God, from your perspective, 1,000 of our years are like three hours to you." Our lifetimes––our entire lifetimes––are like little blips. I mean, they're a third of a blip. You can't even hear the blip it's so small. He says, "Our lives are just so small."

Then he says this, "Yet, you sweep people away in the sleep of death. They are like the new grass of the morning." Moses, could you elaborate on the whole new grass thing? "Yes, I will." He says this, "In the morning, it (the new grass) springs up new. But by evening, it (the new grass) is dry and withered." His point is––as if you needed to be reminded of this––that life is short. We show up late, and we leave early. And if you stay there and focus on that idea long enough, then at some point––this is his point––you have to ask the question that Moses is begging us to ask. And the question is, "Well, then what's the point? What's the purpose?"

I mean, if you're here today, and you're gone tomorrow. I mean, if every time you turn around, another 10 years has gone by. Another 10 years and you finally got that first job. Next thing you know, you've been in that same job you never liked to begin with for 10, 15 years. And then you blink and another 10 years has gone. He wants us to ask, "So then, what's the point if life is like that? If we're like the grass, here today and gone tomorrow, what is the point?" Now, here's the good news: When you ask, "What is the point?" or "What is the purpose?" you ask a purpose question. And remember there is no purpose without context. It's as if––now this is so important––it's as if we walked over to a kitchen drawer and pulled ourselves out and said, "What's this short life? What's this short life for?" Or how about this, "What am I for? What's the short life? What's the short life for? What am I for?" And the answer to that question for each of you and for me, the answer to the question of purpose is the word "context."

Going back to our court illustration, your life goes with... your life is part of... our life connects to... something other than you, purpose. Purpose requires connection. Purpose is what Moses is teaching us. Purpose requires connection. And if you get disconnected from the everlasting to everlasting, you are like a phone cord without a phone. You're like an adapter with nothing to adapt to. And you are gonna end up asking––like we all ask at some point, because it's a good question––"Why am I here?" Now, as Moses goes on––I'm gonna skip the next few verses because I wanna get to the end––in the next few verses, it's even more depressing. Here's the summary of the next few verses: He says, "You know what? If you're not careful, you'll just spend the next bunch of years wandering around, making a bunch of mistakes, paying for it, and then you’ll die. If you are not careful, if you don't pay attention, if you don't understand what I'm talking about, if you do not find the proper context for life, your life is just gonna go by, and then it's going to end."

And picking up on that same theme, he says this, "Our days may come to 70 years or 80, if our strength endures. Yet the best of them..." encourages Moses, "Yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass. And we fly away." This is his description of a life without purpose. This is his description of a life wasted. This is his description of a life where they never figured out the context. What is this life? What is this life for? What am I for? And then in Psalm 90, Moses turns a corner. Just as we're about to give up in despair, he says, "If we only knew." If we only knew. Implication––there's something you don't know. Implication––there's something that's not intuitive. Implication––there's something if you don't pay attention, you'll miss it. If we only knew. And then, this isn't helpful, "If we only knew the power of your anger."

Do we change the subject? Where do we go in? "If we only know the power of your anger." And then it gets even worse. "Your wrath. Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due." Doesn't that sort of address the whole purpose issue right there? I mean, maybe this can be a life verse; you could put it up on your mirror just to be encouraged every day. So, without putting you to sleep with a Hebrew grammar lesson, let me put into different English words the point that he is making, because this is his point. And this is so extremely powerful. Here's what Moses is telling us: He's saying, "If we knew or if we could see God as he is, we would give him the reverence he is due." If we could see God the way that God is, we would give God the reverence he is due. If we could catch a glimpse of the true context of our lives, the everlasting to everlasting God, Moses is saying, "Let me just tell you. If you catch a glimpse of that, you will lean in, and you will align your life with the purposes of God because you would give him, automatically, the reverence, the respect he is due."

But here's the challenge: God's glory is hidden, so we aren't smitten. Doesn't exactly rhyme, but you get the point. God's glory is somewhat hidden, so we aren't smitten. Now Moses knew all about this. If you know the story of Moses, Moses got into the presence of God, and he came home, he came back glowing. People were afraid of him. Now, let me illustrate it this way. Have you ever met a really, really, really famous person? I mean, somebody so famous that you could not speak. Somebody that was so famous that you knew, "If I speak I will say something stupid, so I'm not gonna say anything." And then you said something anyway, and sure enough you walked away going, "Okay, that was stupid. What?" Because you were shaky, you just couldn't get it out. Have you ever met somebody that just made you so nervous? And if you have, here's something that you didn't think about. Maybe you say, "It's so nice to meet you, and we watch your show. Oh my voice. And you know, your..." And then you start talking, talking, talking, talking. And your brain's going, "I'm talking. I'm talking. I can't stop talking. I should be asking questions, but I'm telling this person all about my life. And they do not care, but I can't stop." You ever had that situation? If that person had said to you, "Hey, would you please give me your shoes?" You would have given them your shoes and walked away barefoot, thinking, "I just gave whoever my shoes."

This is the power, you know, of famous people.

Here's my point, if that's the way we are or if that's the way we have the potential to be around a famous person, imagine what we would do if God showed up in all of His glory. This is why, when people say, "Oh, God appeared to me." I'm like, "No, he didn't. Your face is not melted off your skull. God did not appear to you, okay."

"Well, God appeared to me in a dream, and he said, 'Sweetheart.'" I'm like, "No, no, I don't know who that was. And I believe you, but that wasn't God."

When God shows up, we are all face down, and we can't even make a decision. The answer is, "Yes, sir," because the glory of God is overpowering. And here's what Moses is saying––this is a big deal––Moses is saying, "Look, God's face is hidden." God has to pull back on his glory lest we all be smitten, but if you were to focus, and if you were to invite his presence into your life, and if you were to catch a glimpse of the glory of God, it would change everything. Because the context for our little lives is God's everlasting purpose, connected to his everlasting agenda, that's connected to his everlasting glory. That to find purpose in life is to find, is to connect in a significant way, creature and Creator. And when the creature and the Creator are connected in a significant way, that's where we find purpose. And that's why he says––this is so great––"If only we knew, if only we could see, it would change everything. We would find the context for our time. We would find the context for our little, itty-bitty blip of a life."

Here's another idea: God created us on purpose––this is his point––for his purpose. God created us on purpose for his purpose. God created you on purpose for his purpose. And apart from his purpose––don't miss this––apart from his purpose, apart from him, you are an eight-track tape. There is nothing to play you in.

Apart from him, you are a bag phone. Anybody remember the bag phone? If you've got one, it's useless. And here's what Moses is saying, "If you disconnect or if you fool yourself into thinking that somehow you can find purpose in this meaningless life, in this little, itty-bitty, short life," Moses is saying, "Look, I lived 120 years, been there, done that. I've had it all. I've had nothing. And I'm telling you, if you could only see, if you could only see the glory, just a little bit of the glory of God, you would lean in, and it would change everything for you. We need to learn something. We need to remember something." That's why he says this, "If only we knew the power of your anger."

So Moses has turned the corner. He's gonna land the plane, he's gonna give us something practical. He says, "In light of all that, God, teach us, teach us, teach us. We need to learn something, because if we don't learn it, we're gonna miss it. Teach us to number our days." Teach us to number our days, which really means, teach us to remember that our days are numbered. Because if you forget that your days are numbered, you will live a disconnected life. And if you forget that your days are numbered, you will try to mine and pump purpose out of this life. He says, "Teach us to remind ourselves that our days are numbered. Teach us to number our days that..."––and here's the result––"That we may gain a heart."

I love this word of wisdom. Do you know what wisdom is? Wisdom is viewing any topic or any subject within its broadest context. That's what wisdom is. When you meet somebody who's wise and you ask them a question, they come up with these wise answers. You're talking to somebody who is able to pull out of the specifics, pull back from the emotion, and look at whatever it is you're talking about within the broadest context. That's what wisdom is. And Moses says this, "You need to begin to ask God to teach you, to teach you to number your days. To remind you that your time is limited. Your time is short. And if you begin to number your days, you will gain the wisdom that you need. You will have a greater understanding of the context of your life, which is God and his purposes in this world."

Which means, the question that we should ask, and the question that should haunt us, and the question that should inhabit our prayers isn't, "What am I here for?" The question is, "Who am I here for?" Because the great news is this: You are not here for a *what*. A *what* is too small a thing for you to live for. You are not designed for a *what*. You are not created for a *what*. You have not been created in the image of a *what*. You have been created for a *who*. "Who am I here for?" Here's what Moses would say, he would say, "As long as you answer that question with, 'Me, I'm here for me.'" He says, "Then here's your future: Your days may be 70 or 80 years, if your strength endures, yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow. And they quickly pass, and you will fly away." But if you embrace the truth that you were created for God's purposes, that you were created with a purpose for his purposes, if you are willing to say, "I was created on purpose for God's purposes," Moses says that you are on to something. You have connected. You have found the context for life. You have found the context for your time. You are on to the greatest adventure. He would say to us, "Folks, this is why I left the comfort of the palace of Egypt, because I knew God's activity was with the Hebrew slaves. And I did not wanna miss out on what God was up to in the world."

Now, the reason I'm so passionate about this is simply this, and I'll close. I don't want you to miss this. And the older I get, the faster time goes. I look back, and I feel–– I'm telling you––I consider myself so blessed and so fortunate. Because I grew up in a home that since day one, my father said––I mean before I can even remember––he would say, "Andy, you need to pray every day, 'God, show me your plan for my life. Show me your plan for my life. Show me your plan for my life,'" Which he said to me, "I'm here for a purpose, but I'm here for God's purposes."

I've prayed that my whole life. I'm telling you, this was such a significant thing to me. And I may have shared this with you before. This was such a big deal to me. When I was 16 years old, right before my 17th birthday, I started doing a journal, like some of you do journals. My first journal entry––no lie––my first journal entry is this, "If I ever have a son, I am going to tell him God has a purpose for his life. This has made a significant difference for me." My first journal entry.

I don't say this to you to say, "Hey, you know, it's a pretty good thing, it's a pretty cool thing. Hey, I needed something to preach on. This seemed like a good topic." No, this is a life message. And having been one of those fortunate, blessed, unique people who grew up on the positive side of this, I don't want you to miss it. Because one day you'll be 30, and then you're 40, and you're 50, and you're 60, and you're 70. In fact, there are people sitting here today or watching today, and you're thinking, "I wish I'd heard this 20 years ago, because I just bumbled around and rumbled around and tried to find meaning and purpose out of life for me. And, Andy, you're exactly right. Moses, you're exactly right." You don't find purpose without a context. And there is no context other than the context God created you for. You do not want to miss it. You do not want to settle for less. And Moses would say, "And you don't want to miss a day."