What is the purpose of life? Grow up, get an education, get a good job, start a family. That’s where you’ll find happiness, you’re told.

Or maybe you’re a non-conformist and you need to blaze your own trail; find things out for yourself. Through discovery and thinking for yourself, you believe you’ll find peace and meaning.

humanity has long struggled to answer questions like these, to understand the purpose of life and our passage here on earth. We love to understand, to grasp the world we live in. We understand that we are born and that we die, that much is obvious. It’s what happens in between that we need help with.

And I believe that if we understand What God intends for us, it will help us gain a greater understanding of our purpose. So let’s jump to the book of Genesis. Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” We are made by God to image him in the world. That’s our purpose. But what exactly does this mean for our lives?

In his foreword to Sam Crabtree’s book Practicing Affirmation, John Piper writes: “The point of being created in the image of God is that human beings are destined to display God. That’s what images do. And the point of being redeemed by Jesus, and renewed after the image of our Creator, is to recover this destiny”.

The imago dei (the image of God) remains present even in a fallen humanity, We see this in the parable today, there is a shrewd or unrighteous manager who is caring for his masters possessions. The key word here is master. The Greek word is kyrios, and kyrios is the same word that gets translated as Lord when in reference to Jesus. That is why we can also call the shrewd manager an unrighteous manager.

The unrighteous manager is being commended in the parable not for his dismal use of the masters possessions, because that is the reason he is being fired. He is commended for acting shrewdly, so that when he was fired he would be able to gain favor with folks and not be homeless and they will say to themselves, “I remember how he treated me, I will help him out.”

It is this action, the way he wisely uses what he has at his disposal that is commended, the reason being to serve himself is not commended and that would be displaying God in a marred and broken capacity, which is what we are able to do even after the fall. Being shrewd is good, God is shrewd, but doing it for selfish ambition is bad, God is not selfish and so in this way the manager is displaying God in a marred and broken capacity.

The reason being is because sin distorts our ability to display God to the world in the sense of being able to constantly display God to the world, being able to live as God would want us to live. This is where Jesus comes in. When we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, that redemption recovers some of the lost luster and amplifies our ability to display the image of God in our lives.

Humanity is given the exalted status of image-bearer so that we would reflect the glory of our Maker, whose image we bear. I believe one of God’s purpose in creation, therefore, was to fill the earth with his own glory. This is made clear, for example, in Numbers 14:21, where the Lord says, ‘All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD,’ and in Isaiah 43:7, where the Lord refers to His people as those ‘whom I created for my glory’”

If you create a painting, or put up a picture of someone, or create a statue, one of the reasons you do it, is so that, you can look at those paintings, pictures, or statues and remember the person. I have a picture of my mom in my office in her cap and gown so that I can look over and remember her and her determination to succeed and remember to put that into play in my own life.

In similar fashion, God is the reality and we are the image. Images are created to set forth the reality.

What is our purpose? To show God! 1 Timothy 2 states that God desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. And it is us that God uses as image bearers to reveal along with creation, Gods glory, Gods breathtaking majesty, and Gods love.

 God created little images so that they would talk and act and feel in a way that reveals the way God is. So people would look at the way you behave, look at the way you think, the way you feel, and say, “God must be great, God must be real.” That is why we exist.

Here’s the picture in my mind says John Piper “I was created like a mirror. And a mirror that was supposed to be at 45-degrees with the clear reflective side pointing upward so that as God shone on it at the 45-degree angle, it would bounce off and it would make a 90-degree turn and be reflected out into the world.

In the fall, Satan persuades us that our image is more beautiful than God’s image, and so I flip the mirror over. Now the black back side is towards God. It doesn’t reflect anything. Instead, the mirror casts a shadow in the shape of itself on the ground. And we have been preferring ourselves over God ever since.

And in salvation two things happen. The mirror gets turned around and we see the glory of God again and the defilement gets wiped off gradually and we begin to reflect God.”

And each and every single one of us reflects Gods Glory, reflects the image of God in our own unique way. In a sense God has given us tremendous gifts, tremendous blessings in order to help others come to know who Jesus Christ is, and to confess him as Lord and Savior.

The manager acts shrewdly, and so to, God wants us to act shrewdly with what we have not for our own selfish ambition like the manager, but in order to lead people to the savior and to be image bearers of God.

We ask questions like what am I gifted at? What am I passionate about? And we begin to pair our passions and our gifts to see where they line up in Gods ministry and we begin to plug ourselves in. We might not be able to do the things we used to do, but there is still ways for us to be active in Gods mission, to be active as image bearers.

I may not be able to visit people like I used to, but I still can pick up the phone and dial someone, or go on the computer and send an e mail. I may not be able to drive as much as I used to but, I can still take out a card and write someone a letter to let them know I am thinking about them. I may not lead like I once did, but I can participate in a Bible Study and pass on my knowledge and wisdom. I may not be able to be on the front lines, but I can teach others about different things I am passionate about.

The worse thing that can happen is when we are face to face with the Lord and he asks us what we did with what he gave us, is to have to be silent in our response. I don’t know about you, but I want to be able to say, I was shrewd with what you gave me, I was faithful with what you gave me, and I used my gifts in order to be an image bearer that showed people who you are and brought you glory.

This is why the question of who your master is, is so important. If we choose God, then, it is easier to do these things, but if we choose wealth, we begin to act more selfishly and become part of the problem.

We see this in Amos ch 8 where the merchants chose wealth over God and were no longer being image bearers of God.

The prophet writes “When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?”—skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, 6 buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.”

The people were so focused on wealth that even on the new moon festivals and on the sabbath they were no longer thinking about God, just about themselves and how much money they could make, how much wealth they could accumulate.

The nation chose wealth and it led to the mistreatment of people and eventually to the sacking of the Northern Kingdom and eventually the southern kingdom. Choosing wealth over God has dire consequences in this life and the next. As image bearers it is our responsibility to choose God and reflect the glory of God so that those around us can see how amazing God is and choose God over wealth as well.

Now I am not saying other people’s salvation depends on us and our actions, but we are the sowers of the seed and God is the waterer. And I thank God every day for the Holy Spirit who empowers me, emboldens me, and encourages me to be the best image bearer of God I can be.