

believe is your purpose on earth? What do you believe God wants your purpose to be? Prayerfully consider these questions and write your ideas here.

#### **Thursday, January 4**

Read Ephesians 3:1-12. In the message we considered what the Apostle Paul's answers would be to the who and why questions of life. His first two answers would be "Because I have been called by God." and "Because I believe there is meaning behind my life circumstances." Paul immediately in our passage for today identifies himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." (Verse 1) You might remember that Paul received a very dramatic and therefore convincing call upon his life complete with a blinding light and heavenly voice. (Acts 9) Paul also believed himself to be the Apostle to the Gentiles and he describes himself in Ephesians 3 as "a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles." (Verse 10) Paul's circumstance was that he was jailed for what he believed and yet he did not give up on his beliefs. What an inspirational story for us Christ Followers today! For what are you called and through what circumstances are you called to act in our world? Write your thoughts here and pray for God's wisdom and guidance so that you may more fully live for God's purposes.

#### **Friday, January 5**

Read Ephesians 3:1-12. The other two answers Paul would have to the who and why questions of life would be "Because I believe in God's plan for the world." and "Because I have been called to be a servant." God's plan to reconcile the world unto himself involves our willingness to serve toward that purpose. If God calls you to a task that is in line with his plan for the world, then it only follows that God would provide you with the abilities and potential to live fully for God's purposes. How has God prepared you to be of service reconciling the world to God? What gifts and grace do you possess for God's will? Write your thoughts here.

## **Message Notes – December 31, 2023**

### ***Answering the Who and Why Questions of Life\****

- I. Some psychologists tell us that this talk about \_\_\_\_\_ is really a waste of time.
  - A. The reason for this is that we can't fundamentally change our behavior until we fundamentally understand who we are, and who we are is shaped by what we \_\_\_\_\_.
  - B. Resolutions are about what you'll do, but \_\_\_\_\_ change comes as a result of knowing who you are.
- II. If determining \_\_\_\_\_ you are (your true identity) is the beginning of personal transformation, the question of \_\_\_\_\_ you are is the next step that moves you toward a purpose in life.
  - A. Many "Why I am" or "Why I am not" statements connect with \_\_\_\_\_ in some way.
  - B. I'd like for us to explore the thought that we're all shaped by our beliefs, both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and how those beliefs determine our course of action and the trajectory of our lives.
- III. The Apostle Paul is a great example of a person who was \_\_\_\_\_ by his \_\_\_\_\_ as evidenced in his letter to the Ephesians.
  - A. For Paul, belief in Christ was not an intellectual or philosophical exercise, but a fully \_\_\_\_\_ faith.
  - B. How would Paul answer the question, "\_\_\_\_\_ am I a Christian?"
    1. First, he would say, "Because I have been \_\_\_\_\_ by God."

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\*Ephesians 3:1-12

2. Now Paul might also answer “Because I believe there is \_\_\_\_\_ behind my life circumstances.”

3. Paul would also say, “Because I believe in God's \_\_\_\_\_ for the world.”

4. The Apostle Paul would also say that his is a Christian because I have been called to be a \_\_\_\_\_.

IV. The "why" of Christian faith is all about God's plan to \_\_\_\_\_ the whole of creation, remaking and renewing it in God's \_\_\_\_\_.

A. As the New Year breaks, we are called to examine our beliefs and the way they might turn into \_\_\_\_\_.

B. Resolutions are less important than \_\_\_\_\_.

C. The take away from this message on this last day of 2023 is that you have a life that is a \_\_\_\_\_ from God and in receiving that \_\_\_\_\_, you have a \_\_\_\_\_.

D. That's the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ that we can all take into 2024!

## ***Daily Devotional Guide***

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

### **Monday, January 1**

Happy New Year! We hope you had a safe and wonderful New Year's Eve and that you're enjoying and hopefully relaxing on this first day of the New Year 2024! The Message from

yesterday's worship services began with discussion about New Year's Resolutions. Do you make New Year's Resolutions? Why or why not? What would it take for you to be serious about making a change in your life and making a resolution to do so? Consider these questions and write your reflections here.

### **Tuesday, January 2**

Pastor Jack mentioned that some psychologists believe that making New Year's resolutions is a waste of time. They believe that we can't fundamentally change our behavior until we fundamentally understand who we are. Real change, it can then be said, is possible by knowing who you are and who you are not. How would you describe yourself? What parameters are important to you? What causes break your heart and calls you toward action? What are you not? What organizations, ideologies, or world views can you not respect and honor? It is just as important to know who you are not as knowing who you are. Now, add the dimension of your religious faith to your description of yourself (if you haven't already). How might adding your faith perspectives change your self-description? Prayerfully consider these questions and write your response here.

### **Wednesday, January 3**

Read Ephesians 3:1-12. We've spent some time on *who* we are in this world. Now let's spend some time considering why we are in life. The “why we are question” is connected to our purpose in life. We should once again ask how your religious faith influences your concept of why you exist. What is your purpose, according to your religious faith? How does the nature of your relationship with God through Jesus the Christ affect your daily living? How do you see your participation in building the Kingdom of God on earth “as it is in heaven?” What do you