

Why Am I Here?

Module 2 — Outworking God's Purpose for My Life



*...let us throw off everything that hinders and...
run with perseverance the race marked out for us*

(Hebrews 12:1 - NIV)

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Why Am I Here?



In Study #1, I listed **three main steps** required to fulfil the specific ministry that God has appointed for us:

Step 1 — Recognise that He has a specific purpose for our life.

Step 2 — Recognise what His specific purpose is for our life.

Step 3 — Outwork the specific purpose He has appointed for us.

We're up to Step 3—outworking God's purpose for our life—where we'll focus, in particular, on:

- (1) how God works to focus and shape our thinking to achieve His purpose for our life, and
- (2) how we can recognise, avoid, and overcome, some obstacles we might encounter along the way.

Alignment with God

Phil 2:12-13 (NIV) *12 ...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.* (emphasis added)

Based on this passage, we can construct a simple table that broadly describes four possible combinations of attitude and action in relation to the will of God and, therefore, four possible "alignments" with God:

Alignment with God		Attitudes	
		I don't want to do what God wants	I want to do what God wants
Actions	I don't do what God wants	1	3
	I do what God wants	2	4

Each cell in this table represents the intersection (combination) of a certain row and column description. Let's number these four alignments (cells) to make it easier to describe them:

- "1" describes someone who doesn't want to do what God wants and, in practice (based on their actions), doesn't do what God wants.
- "2" describes someone who doesn't want to do what God wants but, in practice (based on their actions), does what God wants.
- "3" describes someone who wants to do what God wants but, in practice (based on their actions), doesn't do what God wants.
- "4" describes someone who wants to do what God wants and, in practice (based on their actions), does what God wants.

There is no single, correct way of labelling each cell in this table but I will use the following labels to describe these combinations of attitude and action:

Alignment with God		Attitudes	
		I don't want to do what God wants	I want to do what God wants
Actions	I don't do what God wants	Rebellion	Deception
	I do what God wants	Reluctance	Discipleship

Here are some Bible passages, and examples, that describe these four alignments with God:

Rebellion

19 "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; 20 but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. (Isa 1:19-20 - NIV - emphasis added)

12 For our offences are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offences are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: 13 rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on our God... (Isa 59:12-13 - NIV - emphasis added)

An individual example of "Rebellion" would be the Egyptian Pharaoh to whom Moses delivered God's command that he release the nation of Israel from slavery:

1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.'" 2 Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go." (Ex 5:1-2 - NIV)

Reluctance (or Resistance)

1 Cor 9:17 (AMP - emphasis added) — Paul is speaking about God's commission to minister to others
 For if I do this work of my own free will, then I have my pay (my reward); but if it is not of my own will, but is done reluctantly and under compulsion, I am [still] entrusted with a [sacred] trusteeship and commission.

An example of "Reluctance" would be Jonah. Initially, he rebelled against God's command to go to Nineveh to preach against their wickedness—Jonah 1:1-3 (NIV):

1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." 3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Then, after being swallowed, and vomited out, by a great fish, he obeyed God's repeat command to go to Nineveh—Jonah 3:1-3 (NIV):

1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." 3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh.

But, clearly, he did this reluctantly...as evidenced by his resentment (and self-pity) when God decided not to destroy the city because the people repented when they heard his warning about God's coming judgment—Jonah 3:10-4:3 (NIV):

10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. 4:1 But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. 2 He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

Deception

Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice. (James 1:22 - TEV - emphasis added)

Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you. Whoever does what God approves of has God's approval as Christ has God's approval. (1 John 3:7 - GWT - emphasis added)

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. (Eph 5:6 - NIV - emphasis added)

This is a fearful category, for many reasons, in particular, because:

- it includes people who think (or hope) they are right with God...but aren't, and
- deceived people don't realise they are deceived.

This alignment could also be described by other terms such as "Religion" or "Hypocrisy", because it not only describes people who want to do what God wants, yet fail to do that for some reason, but also people who engage in certain activities thinking this is what God wants...when it isn't.

Here's a Bible example of deception, in Mark 7:6-9 (TNIV):

6 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.' 8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions." 9 And he continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!"

Discipleship

Jesus is our best example of discipleship:

John 6:38 (NIV - emphasis added)

...I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

John 8:29 (NIV - emphasis added)

The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.

Application (App-WAIH-Study#23.doc)

1. What are some ways people might try to justify wrongdoing?
2. Why might someone resent doing something they know God wants?
3. What are some ways we might become deceived into not doing what God wants?
4. What might someone need to do to move from a position of "Rebellion", "Reluctance" or "Deception" to one of "Discipleship"?
5. Which of the four alignments with God can I recognise in my life—in the past or at present?

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Why Am I Here?

Outworking God's purpose for my life

Study #24



Alignment with God (continued)

In Study #23, we analysed four main scenarios in relation to our alignment with God's purposes and I labelled these as Rebellion, Reluctance, Deception and Discipleship.

This classification is not meant to be precise. Rather, it gives us a very broad way of describing:

- differences, between people, in their alignment with God, and
- differences in alignment with God in the life of an individual person, either:
 - differences in alignment at different times in their life, or
 - differences in alignment in different areas of their life.

Much of the material in following studies will be drawn from the life of Moses and, interestingly, it's possible to associate each of these four alignments with different stages of Moses' life:

Rebellion — Moses — arguing with God at the burning bush:

Ex 4:12-14 (NIV) 12 *"Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."* 13 *But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."* 14 *Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses...*

To this point, Moses has not only refused to do what God wants but also, by his repeated objections, demonstrated that he doesn't want to do what God wants.

Reluctance — Moses — during his return to Egypt and early confrontations with Pharaoh:

After arguing with God at the burning bush, Moses finally agrees to do what God wants, by returning to Egypt to confront Pharaoh and lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt. However, he does this reluctantly and with some resentment. How do we know?

Here are three signs that Moses was still not fully aligned with God in his attitudes (or his actions), even though he is now doing something God wants, by returning to Egypt:

1. His apparent lack of repentance for arguing with God at the burning bush.
2. His (continued) disobedience in the serious matter of the circumcision of his son:

Ex 4:24-26 (NIV) 24 *At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met [Moses] and was about to kill him.* 25 *But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched [Moses'] feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said.* 26 *So the Lord let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)* (Note: Gen 17:9-14, for example)

3. His resentment and complaining against God at the first signs of trouble in Egypt:

Ex 5:22-23 (NIV) *22 Moses returned to the Lord and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? 23 Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."*

Deception — Moses — when he killed the Egyptian:

Ex 2:11-12 (NIV) *11 One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. 12 Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.*

Clearly, Moses knew that it was wrong to kill this Egyptian, but he did it anyhow...perhaps thinking that the end justifies the means and that his act of murder might be overlooked (or, perhaps, even endorsed) by God because of this.

Acts 7:23-25 (NIV) *23 When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. 24 He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defence and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. 25 Moses thought that his own people would realise that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.*

Moses seems to have thought that avenging one Israelite, and disposing of one Egyptian, would so impress his own people that they would realise God was using him to rescue the whole nation of Israel from the whole nation of Egypt (including their army). What was he thinking?

Discipleship — Moses — evidently, for much of the last 40 years of his life:

Deut 34:10-12 (NIV) *10 Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, 11 who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt — to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. 12 For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.*

And here's another amazing description of Moses—after he came down from Mount Sinai and discovered that, in his absence, the people of Israel had made, and worshipped, a golden calf:

Ex 32:31-32 (NIV) *31 So Moses went back to the Lord and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. 32 But now, please forgive their sin — but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."*

I can't fully comprehend how someone could love people so much—especially a nation of rebels against God—that they would be prepared to give up their place with God in eternity if that would secure, for them, a place with God in eternity.

Application (App-WAIH-Study#24.doc)

1. What (if anything) changed in Moses' attitude(s), during his 40 years in Midian, after he fled from Egypt, up to the time he encountered God at the burning bush?
2. What (if anything) did God achieve, during Moses' 40 years in Midian, to prepare him for the ultimate outworking of his call to deliver the nation of Israel from Egypt?
3. Can I think of any other Bible character(s) who, at some stage in their life, typified an alignment of "Reluctance" or "Deception"? What evidence for this do I see?