



Sermon Series: Thrive: Living on Purpose

To be used with Session 2: Purpose Abandoned

Sermon Title Possibilities: An X-Ray Examination

Scripture: Psalms 14:1-7

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “Thrive: Living on Purpose,” this sermon exposes the heart of man, the evil actions of humanity, and the will of God. Building on the principles of meaninglessness established by King Solomon, we are awakened to the foolishness of man, the corruption of their deeds, and the omnipresence of God, who sees all and knows all. We learn that there are individuals who appear to be in control, abusing others in their path. However, there is a God who sits high and looks low, providing purpose for those aligned with His will.

Introduction: Joe Edward Alcorn Jr., an African American physicist, engineer, inventor, and former professor at Howard University, is credited with inventing the x-ray imaging spectrometer that was patented in 1984. This remarkable instrument allowed scientists to more accurately identify the chemical components of a substance, which were previously unavailable to the naked eye. Alcorn believed there was more to a substance and invented an instrument to prove his hypothesis. Not only was Alcorn correct, but his revelatory instrument exposed features once hidden from the human eye.

In the same way, God looks beyond the surface to reveal and expose hidden features in the heart of humanity. In our text, the psalmist offers us a glimpse from the perspective of God, who sees all and knows all. Through this glorious divine perspective, we not only see the core of humanity but also the revelation of God's sovereignty, who is fully in control of all things beckoning an authentic relationship between creator and creation.

1. A Heart Examined (Psalms 14:1-3).

In the opening verse, something has triggered the psalmist. We do not know the origin of this psalm, but there is evidence of a rejection of God. The statement in verse 1, “that there is no God,” is reminiscent of many atheists living their lives with this premise. Like King Solomon, a warning is issued as the focus shifts from the actions of creation to the reality of the Creator, who looks down from heaven in search of the upright. The psalmist acknowledges that corruption is

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rampant, and it seems no one is willing to live righteously. As we examine news outlets and social media commentary, this world is not seeking God but rather seeking solace in self. Are we among the foolish? This question must serve as a sobering reminder as we walk out our faith. What do the x-rays reveal about our lives? If a closer examination were to take place, what would it show? Does preaching, teaching, or attending church mean we are in good standing with God? These are the questions that challenge us as we undergo a heart examination.

2. Our Deeds Examined (Psalms 14:4-6).

The first three verses (1-3) lay the foundation for the next three (4-6). The psalmist noted the actions of individuals whose hearts are far removed from the God. If there is no God (as proclaimed by them in verse 1), there are no limits to how a person governs themselves. In verse 4, an examination of deeds reveals that God's people are being devoured, highlighting the abuse that evildoers inflict on the poor. However, the encouraging message in verse 6 emphasized the presence of the Lord as a refuge in difficult moments. While these verses demonstrate the evils of humanity, there is still good news. Despite the abuses, atrocities, and evil plans of those with bad intentions, the Lord serves as a refuge, providing shelter and protection in times of trouble. Our God is great, and despite the ill intentions of humanity, there is safety in the arms of God, who stands as a strong refuge for us.

3. Our God Examined (Psalms 14:7)).

Psalm 14 is a lament with a beautiful conclusion. The joyful singing in Israel and the gladness expressed indicate that salvation and deliverance brought by the Lord were received with enthusiasm and optimism from Jacob. This concluding verse stands as a powerful expression of hope and restoration amid despair and oppression. It also highlights the yearning in God's heart for His people, reflecting the enduring theme of redemption and deliverance throughout the entire Bible. God's faithfulness is a deed worth examining, and His ability to bring restoration and joy into the lives of His people further extends His love and grace to those who put their trust in Him. As God continues to provide deliverance and hope, He demonstrates a desire for a relationship with His creation, which involves rising to meet the standards of holiness in heart and righteousness in deeds.

Conclusion: God is clear about the expectations He has for His creation. His examination includes holiness and righteousness from those who are His own. This is reminiscent of the Book of Revelation, where God examines the churches to course-correct many of their tendencies. God's faithfulness is everlasting, and as His people, we must be willing (and able through the Holy Spirit) to obey and trust His commands. Despite the various mishaps and missteps by those in opposition to the Lord's commands, there will come a day when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The standard is set in the Old Testament with

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the prophets, and is fulfilled in the New Testament with Jesus Christ. May we remain the kind of people whose examinations yield a good report from our divine Doctor.

Dr. Mark Louis Johnson Sr. is a third-generation pastor with over 30 years of experience. He received a Master of Divinity and Master of Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological, where he serves as a Professor and Evangelism and Pastor Ministries.

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