

WHO AM I AND WHY AM I HERE?

Welcome back to the Sisterhood Lounge Room and our first episode of 2024. This month Nicola is joined by Grace B, Grace P, and Katie, discussing the big questions we all ask ourselves: 'Who am I and why am I here'?

As you watch this episode, we have highlighted the key scriptures, thoughts shared as well as a few questions you can use in discussion with your group, or in your own devotionals ... enjoy.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

Nicola said that each one of us throughout different seasons of our lives ask ourselves big questions like: *Why am I on planet earth? What else am I supposed to be doing with my life? Am I in the will of God, fulfilling my calling?* These questions can cause anxiety, so let's learn from one another on how to navigate these questions.

Grace B used the analogy of building furniture to explain the importance of understanding our purpose. Often, we try to build something without a manual and can end up with misshapen pieces or incomplete structures. The word of God is our manual. Genesis is a great place to start when trying to understand who we are created to be. In Genesis 1:26-28, before Adam and Eve sinned, God gave them a purpose to reflect His image, to be fruitful, to rule over the earth and care for his creation. When Adam and Eve sinned, there was a disconnect between humanity and God. Humanity became disconnected from the very person we were created to reflect. It is only through Jesus we can be restored to that purpose. Staying grounded in His Word and rooted in community is vital.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 1:26-28

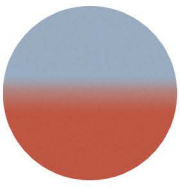
Q- Have you ever asked yourself why am I here?

Q- How does knowing we are created in the image of God affect how we are to live our lives?

Q- If you could ask one question about your purpose, what would it be?

For many people in the bible their purpose was revealed out of the blue, or in the opposite direction from which they were heading, but all of them were walking closely with God and attentive to his voice. In pursuing purpose, the first posture we need is one of proximity to God. How close are we walking with God and allowing him to guide our footsteps?

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We don't make plans and ask God to come along with us, instead we choose to follow Him.

Jeremiah 29:11 says: ***For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. This reminds us that that God is the one with plans, our role is to stick close and trust Him.***

God often reveals his plans piece by piece. It would be overwhelming to know all that he plans upfront. He graciously takes us through life, one day at a time, where his mercies are new daily.

Q- Have you been tempted to make your own plans at the start of this new year?

Q- Whose voice do you trust most in your life: your own, a parent, a close friend, or the Holy Spirit's?

Q- Are you confident that you are following God's lead or are you wrestling for the drivers seat?

Nicola invited Grace P to share how we can find purpose in our vocation. Grace read from Matthew 16:24 where Jesus says to His disciples: *Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.* She then read Mark 12:30 where Jesus teaches that the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

She reminded us that in everything we do we are called to carry our cross and love the Lord. In any workplace, we can be the hands and feet of Jesus, and for many, we are the only interaction they will have with Jesus. Grace said that when we live our lives with purpose that we signpost people to Jesus.

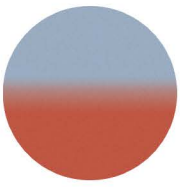
Nicola added that our vocations will change over time, but there is always purpose in what we do and that we have been purposely placed with the people we are situated around.

Nicola asked Katie to explain the difference between the calling we all share and the calling to specific activities, vocations, or interests. Katie said that our shared calling is to be like Jesus, to reflect the image of God, to be in a close relationship with Him, and to be His hands and feet in the world. What we sense as individuals may look a little more specific. You first need to understand and live out who you are meant to be before you can live out what you are called to do. Katie said that each morning before her children go to school she doesn't say: *Work hard so that you can be a lawyer.* Instead, she says: *You are blessed and highly favoured by the Lord,* and they respond with: *I'm fearfully and wonderfully made.* She does this so they understand that what they do matters less, what is important is who they are. God is more interested in who we are becoming, rather than what we are doing.

Q- What are you focused on: Who you are meant to be or what you are meant to be doing?

Q- If you are the only interaction those in your workplace will have with Jesus, are you reflecting his image to them and living your life with purpose?

Q- Do you have a clear sense of purpose in your current season?



There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens.
Ecclesiastes 3:1

Nicola asked Grace how our calling and purpose adapt in different seasons. Grace B read from Ecclesiastes which tells us that there is a season for everything. She doesn't believe that our callings change because we never graduate from being followers and disciples of Jesus. But our need for wisdom is different in every season. She referenced how she now has the wisdom to understand that in seasons past that may have felt dull, silent, and painful, God was still at work and her calling was still active. When we understand this, we can enter new seasons with peace and not with anxiety. When we focus on who we are in every season, we are less stressed about what we do. Grace said that no season is lost. When we lack wisdom or are struggling to see purpose in a season, we can simply ask God for wisdom, who delights to give generously.

Nicola added that she has been able to look back at seasons and see that God was setting up what was coming next. There is wisdom in remembering that he knows the beginning and the end, that he always has a plan, and it may be in those seasons of pain and silence that God is refining us, building faith, resilience, and perseverance.

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

James 1:5

Q- What season are you in now? Do you need to seek wisdom to outwork your calling in this moment?

Q- Reflecting on past seasons that may have discouraging or painful, are you able to see how God worked through it?

Q- Have seasons of God's silence built resilience in you?

Nicola asked if there is ever a time that we can miss out or disqualify ourselves from purpose or calling? Grace P referenced the story of Peter denying Jesus three times, and then Jesus reaffirms Peter's purpose by asking him to feed his sheep three times. She also referenced Jonah who disobeyed and ran away from his purpose, and that God created a way for him to get back on track. Grace reminded us that God is gracious and his grace never ends so we can't disqualify ourselves, but we do have free will, so we can opt out. Nicola spoke about how the Israelites came back to God and their calling so many times. She also mentioned the story of the prodigal son, and how this reflects the heart of God that we can always come back and be close to our Father. Nicola said this gives her confidence and encouragement that we truly cannot miss our purpose, because we can always come back and be restored.

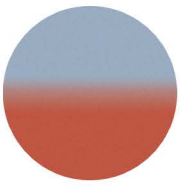
For the gifts of God and his call are irrevocable.

Romans 11:29

Q- Have you ever been worried that you have missed or disqualified yourself from your purpose or calling?

Q- The stories of Jonah, Peter, and the Israelites show that God always provides a way back. Take a moment to reflect of the kindness, mercy, and graciousness of God - he never gives up on us!

Q- Have you ever opted out of where you felt God was directing you?



Nicola asked Katie if our purpose change over time. Katie said that it's important to remember that our calling doesn't fully belong to us, it has been given to us. So, we have to be ready to surrender it at any time. She referenced King Saul and how he was not willing to lay down his calling because he held onto it too tightly it became wrapped together with his identity. Whereas John the Baptist was able to adapt and change once Jesus had arrived. The difference between the two is John was focused on who he was becoming, not what he was doing.

Nicola referenced Romans 12 and how it speaks about us being living sacrifices, living a surrendered life that includes learning to sacrifice ourselves. She referred to John the Baptist and how it was such a beautiful thing to see that his purpose was to make a way for Jesus, and once He came, his purpose changed.

Katie added that even when God does ask us to lay down a purpose there is always a reason and something new may be coming because he always has a plan. Nicola reminded us to not despise the small beginnings, that may not look like a grand calling, but a new beginning.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength.

Ephesians 1:18-19

Lastly, Nicola asked Grace what to do when grappling with your calling.

Grace B suggested three things:

1. Pray. Wrestle with the Lord, He knows what's going on and its important to be in ongoing conversation with him.
2. Get in the word. Keep going back to the source to understand the story of God and how you fit into it.
3. Be in Christian community. We sharpen and shape one another and can be affirmed, have life spoken over us, and may receive prophetic and wise counsel.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

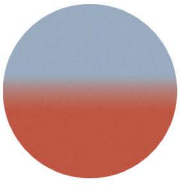
1 Peter 2:9

Q- Have you ever allowed your calling to become entangled with your identity? If so, what can you learn from how John the Baptist adapted in his purpose?

Q- When have you had to surrender your desires and say to God, not my will but yours be done?

Q- Looking at the three things Grace shared to do when you are grappling with your calling, which one may you need to focus on?

Grace encouraged us that we can be confident that we will not miss our purpose and calling. God wants us to walk in it and live fulfilled lives. If we go after Him, we cannot miss it. She ended by sharing this quote:



The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

Frederick Buchner

Prayer

Thank you, Father, that you created me with calling and purpose. I know my priority above all is to love you and be loved by you. Help me to walk closely with you and please order and direct my path according to your will. Help me to reflect your heart to those in my world and enable me to find your purpose in whatever season I am in. I choose to trust you and believe that you will do more than I could ask or imagine. Amen