

MOVIE: “The Passion of the Christ”

Sub Topic Theme:
Reclaiming Our
Original Purpose

Lesson Objective:

To provide teens with a visually rich portrayal of one man’s inspiring commitment to fulfill his purpose in life. Christ’s overriding purpose in life was to do his Father’s will no matter the cost. In doing so he showed us the true nature and character of God.



Intro to the Movie:

This movie hardly needs an introduction! When it was released in 2004, it generated a firestorm of controversy. The reason for the debate was due to director Mel Gibson’s commitment to the Gospel narrative accounts of the crucifixion and portrayal of Christ’s final moments. (Not to mention there were doubtless other unseen spiritual battles being waged in another realm.) It is by far the most graphic portrayal ever produced of the tortuous death of the Messiah. For this reason it receives an R rating, as it should. For it is impossible to accurately bring to screen the final 12 hours of Jesus life without depicting the intense violence directed at the Son of God.

The reason for showing such a graphic movie is not to gross teens out. Rather it is to help them see the dogged determination Christ displays on his way to Golgotha. As Jesus trudges along the rocky path, it is clear that he is physically and emotionally exhausted. Spiritually, however, he could not be more focused. Jim Caviezel, the actor for Jesus, does a superb job of portraying Christ’s relentless pursuit of God’s will. The look in his eye powerfully captures the depth of God’s love for humankind, even in the face of the most undeserved evil of all time. It is humbling to watch. Christ is like the marathon runner straining with all his might to cross the finish line. He is like the star athlete in triple overtime who pours out every last ounce of strength to propel his team to victory. But where such men endure for personal gain, Christ perseveres for our gain. What a display of sacrifice. It truly is love personified.

Fellow leaders, this is your 3D lens as you prepare your teens to watch this movie. Challenge your audience to pay close attention not to the violence but to the sheer determination Christ shows in fulfilling this painful task. You might consider replacing the popcorn with boxes of tissues. You might also consider showing this movie around

Lent or Easter. To be sure, it is an emotionally draining movie to sit through. But it is one that everyone must see sometime in his or her life, perhaps even multiple times.

Discussion Group Questions:

Leaders, there are more questions here than you probably need. These are here only as a guide to help facilitate small group discussions. Feel free to delete some or add your own that you think are better suited for your students. The main idea here is that students interact with the movie and extend that discussion to the hurt and pain we all experience in this world.

1. As you watched the movie, was there anything that you found upsetting? If so, tell us about it.
2. Did you find the movie inspiring? If so, what was it that captured your imagination?
3. Does the suffering that Christ endured during his final hours help put your suffering into perspective? If so, what did you learn about your present circumstances?
4. What does Christ's suffering say about our culture that values personal pleasure above everything else?
5. After watching this movie, what would you say was Christ's purpose in coming to earth?
6. What would you say is our purpose in this life?
7. As a result of watching this movie, how will it affect the way you treat people?

Group input:

Leader-solicited responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions.

Gathering of ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups with a focus on guiding your teens toward a proper understanding of Christ's overriding purpose in his life.

Bullet Objective:

Put this summary section in your own words, but here is an idea you can use:

When we watch a movie like this it surfaces a ton of issues and generates a lot of discussion. But I want to draw our attention to how this movie depicts the clarity with which Jesus lived his life. Jesus had a laser clear understanding of his purpose and mission for coming to earth. And the great news is that when we wrap our heads around Jesus' purpose in life, we can then begin to get a firm grasp of God's purpose for our lives as well.

In Genesis 1 – 2 we get a rare glimpse of the way things were supposed to be. These two chapters record the world as it was in its pristine, unblemished, unadulterated state. We see here God's original intent for all that he created. When creation operates within its intended purpose, there is amazing harmony.

Take humankind, for example. God created Adam and Eve with a specific purpose in mind. That purpose was to perform the function of God in all creation. There were not God, but through them all creation would see and know exactly what God is like – his nature, character, and personality. Unfortunately, when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God in Genesis 3, they not only sinned but they also failed to uphold the image of God. Their very nature changed, such that they were incapable of representing God. They became defective in this regard. Sadly, this defection has permeated the whole human race. So all humankind is simply not able to fulfill the original, God-given purpose of accurately reflecting God in the world.

That is all except one. One person in all human history is different. He's wholly unlike you and me and every other person who ever lived. God sent Jesus Christ to this earth to perform the very same function that he gave to Adam and Eve. That is to reflect God in all creation. But where Adam and Eve and all their descendants failed, Christ succeeded. Christ wasn't just created in the image of God; he is God in the flesh. He is the image – like a reflection in the mirror! Consequently, his purpose was simply to do everything that God the Father wanted him to do. Jesus was intent on doing nothing save the Father's will.

That was his purpose in coming to earth. By looking at Jesus, we see a picture of the very nature of God. We know that in every situation and in every encounter Jesus had he responded in the exact way that God would have responded.

Now that purpose is best summarized in Matthew 22:37-39. Listen as I read these three pivotal verses:

Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The

second most important commandment is like it: Love your neighbor as you love yourself.””

Simply put, Jesus said that we are to love God and to love others. But the only way any of us can fulfill that purpose for our lives is if God enters into our hearts and changes us from the inside out. Human effort will not work. No matter how hard we try to reclaim our original purpose, we cannot do it apart from God working in our lives.

Challenge:

Do you want your life to count for something? Do you want to give all your time, energy, talent, and resources to a cause greater than yourself? Or, do you want to get to the end of your life only to discover that you poured yourself into a hopeless cause? I know I don't. I want my existence on this green and blue and white marble that we call earth to count for something. I want to live my life with purpose and intentionality. I don't want to waste a single day that has been given to me.

But the ONLY way this can happen is if I seek God's purposes for my life, to make him look great in all that I say and do, to daily live the Greatest Commandment. And the only way that can happen is if I surrender my life to the man who gave his life for me.

Have you surrendered to Jesus? Friends, I promise you the only way you can fulfill your original purpose in life is if you come to God in repentance for all the ways you have failed to uphold his image. God is great! This movie shows the greatness of God. So I challenge you receive God's purpose for your life. Admit that you messed up. Believe that Jesus died for you in accordance with God's will for his life. And commit to honor God by making him look great in all creation.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, we stand in awe at the extension of your love for us as shown in the life and death of your Son, Jesus Christ. We stand in shame at how we give ourselves to far lesser causes than your grand purposes. Forgive us for all the ways we fail to represent you well. And empower us by your grace and mercy to fulfill our original purpose which can only be found in Jesus Christ. By the power of your Holy Spirit, draw us to yourself. Amen!