

SUB TOPIC THEME:
Reclaiming Our Original Purpose

Lesson Objective:

The purpose of this lesson is to identify Jesus' purpose in life during his earthly ministry. By precisely defining Jesus' purpose, students will be challenged to fulfill God's general purpose for their lives given their unique talents, personality, and passions in life.

Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below).
2. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
3. A shoe or ball to help facilitate discussion.
4. A life of integrity where the leader's actions are in harmony with the words spoken.
Teens need to see the difference before they hear the difference!
5. A computer with internet access to show a video (optional).



Instructive Prep:

Ask most evangelical Christians today what Jesus' purpose was in coming to the earth, and you'll likely hear something along these lines: "Jesus purpose in coming to earth was to live a perfect life, die on the cross, and rise from the dead in order to save sinners."

Because of that understanding, it is not surprising that, being true to their name, evangelical Christians place a big emphasis of evangelism, that is, drawing people into a personal relationship with Christ. In fact, doing the will of God seems almost synonymous with evangelizing. Thus, if we're not sharing the gospel with people on a regular basis, then we're not doing the will of God. But this is never meant to be a new legalism for us as his followers.

But, if this was Jesus' sole purpose, what are we to make of the ten lepers that Jesus heals in Luke 17:11-19. Only one comes back to say thanks, and Luke does not imply that Jesus chased the others down in order to share the gospel with them. Or what of the blind man that Jesus healed at Bethsaida in Mark 8:22-26. The Gospel writer doesn't press the evangelistic nature of the encounter; he only says that it happened. Or what about the Syrophenician woman in Mark 7:24-30. In this instance, Jesus' reply to her begging request appears to be insulting! Jesus eventually heals her daughter, but no mention is made of his sharing the gospel

with her or that either of them ever made a profession of faith. This is not to mention the thousands of other unnamed individuals Jesus healed during his earthly ministry

The examples cited above suggest that Jesus' purpose is bigger, broader, and more encompassing than just saving sinners. He did not come *just* to save the lost. Indeed, he came to show us exactly who God is (John 17:6; Col 1:15a; Heb 1:3); thereby completing what Adam was not able to do (Gen 1:27; 3:6). Second, he also came to do the will of the Father (ref Matt 7:21; 12:50; 21:31; 26:39, 42; Mark 3:35; 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 7:17; 9:31; 17:4). There is literally a mountain of references in the Gospel accounts which support the assertion that Jesus' number one priority was to do nothing save the Father's will which, indeed, included saving the lost (Luke 19:10). Incidentally, God's will is best summarized by the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39). See also Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45.

And so we offer a more refined view of Jesus' purpose:

Jesus' purpose was to reflect the true nature of God by loving God with his whole heart, soul, and mind and by loving others as he loved himself. Simply put, Jesus' life is the supreme example of loving God and loving others. In doing this, he represented the true nature of God's character in all creation.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: *learn, feel, do, and what next*. We want students to learn something new, connect at an emotional level to some degree, and participate by doing something during this study that brings them to a point of decision. Finally, the *what next* focuses on a change of attitude and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember, our goal is a greater degree of personal wholeness in kids' lives (i.e. spiritual, emotional, mental, and behavioral), so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together. Have fun and lead well!

Intro:

One of the great tragedy's today among some young people is overall lack of purpose in life. Even for those teens that do seem driven and goal oriented, their sense of purpose is often misguided by impure motives. If we are to make the most of our days, then we must attain a clear, unambiguous sense of godly purpose in our lives. There is no better person to look to than Jesus Christ, who is arguably the world's most influential person in all of human history. He accomplished more in his short life and with farther reaching affects than anyone else before or after him. And he did it because of the clarity with which he lived his life.

Intro Story:

Kirby Puckett was a sensational baseball player. Drafted in 1982 by the Minnesota Twins in the first round, Kirby's major league debut was a foreshadow of his Hall of Fame career. In his first game against the California Angels on May 8, 1984, he went 4 for 5. He became the first batter to record 1,000 hits in his first five full calendar years. He was also only the second player to record 2,000 hits in his first ten calendar seasons. His career batting average of .318 is the highest by any right handed American League batter in the second half of the twentieth century.

Defensively, he was just as sharp. He earned the Golden Glove award six times during his twelve-year career. He made the All-Star team 10 times, and was named the All-Star MVP in 1993. His offensive and defensive play propelled the Twins to World Series Championships in 1987 and 1991.

In his hey-day it looked as if Kirby would play on like the seemingly immortal Cal Ripken, Jr. But on the morning of March 28, 1996, Kirby awoke with blindness in his right eye. Doctors said he had developed glaucoma. For the first time in his career, he was placed on the disabled list. Three surgeries failed to correct the problem, and on July 12, 1996, Kirby retired from the game he loved, from the game he had given his life to.

In the succeeding years after Kirby's retirement, his personal life crumpled. He got in trouble with the law and became increasingly more belligerent and abusive. Plus, he ballooned to over 300 lbs., which was a lot for his 5'9" frame. Without baseball, Kirby couldn't function. The love of his life had been ripped away from him, and he failed to manage the transition well.

Sadly, Kirby's reckless lifestyle caught up with him. He passed away on March 5, 2006, eight days shy of his 46th birthday and not even ten years since retiring. The autopsy showed that he died of a stroke.

I disagree.

He died because he lost his sense of purpose.

You can watch a short video here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yw3yPF1_FZM

Personal Reflection Questions:

Take a shoe or a ball and give it to one student. They can pass or toss it to another student to begin the discussion on question one. After answering, each person gets to pass it to someone who hasn't answered. Do the same randomness throughout all the questions.

1. What is most tragic about Kirby Puckett's life? Why do you think he spiraled downward after his abrupt retirement?
2. Do you know of any other athlete with a similar story? If so, tell us about it.
3. Why is having a strong sense of purpose important in life?
4. For what purpose would you say most people live their lives?
5. What would you say is your purpose? Why are you here on this earth during this moment in history?
6. Looking at the life of Jesus, what would you say was his driving purpose in life? How was he able to do so much during his relatively short life?

Central Bible Passage:

For this lesson, students will read out loud the entire chapter of Matthew 22 with special focus being given to verses 34-40. If time is a consideration, then consider reading only Matthew 22:34-40.

Life Application:

1. As a group, brainstorm all the things in Jesus' life where he demonstrated the Greatest Commandment. See if you can list 30 different events.
2. Think of your best friend. Write that person's name down. Now, consider an act of kindness that would show them a genuine display of God's love. If that seems too easy for you, then write down the name of the person you would most prefer to avoid.
3. Go around the circle and have everyone share what they would like to do with their lives. Write their responses on a white board. Then go around the room and have your students think through how they might fulfill the Greatest Commandment within their individual professions.

4. If the previous application is too far out for your students, ask them to share all the activities they are currently involved in, whether at school, church, or community. Then begin a discussion on how they might fulfill the Greatest Commandment beginning this week.

Student Response:

1. What did you learn about Jesus' purpose from the passage in Matthew 22:34-40?
2. From Jesus' example, what can you learn about God's general purpose for your life?
3. The most meaningful lesson I learned from today's small group discussion was...
4. True or False: Today's lesson and discussion made me realize that I want to align my life with God's purposes.