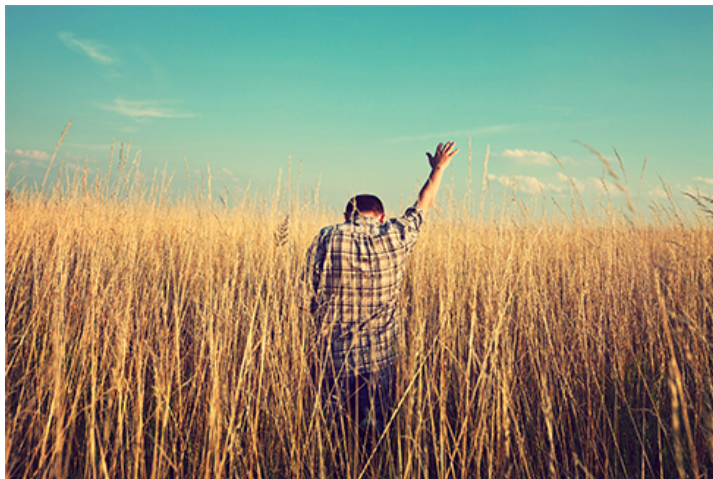


SUB TOPIC THEME: It's All About God!

Lesson Objective:

In another small group session, we served our teens by unmasking the commonly held assumption that life is all about our selfish wants and desires. But if that is not what life is all about, then we should naturally inquire as to what it is all about. That is the focus of this lesson. Principally speaking, life is all about God. Though this is true, the challenge facing leaders in conveying this concept to young people is why. Why is life all about God? Consequently, the aim of this lesson is to investigate God's attributes by looking at specific Scripture texts. In doing so, we will move closer to answering the question of why life is all about God.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Computer or Internet connection to watch online videos
2. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
3. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
4. A shoe or ball to help facilitate discussion.
5. 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!

Instructive Prep:

The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with one of humanity's most gnawing questions, "What is the chief end of man?" Another way to ask this is, "What is man's ultimate purpose in life?" The Catechism responds: "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." In fact, the Catechism's first 12 questions out of the 107 total – that's about 11% of the whole document – concern God directly. This is fitting. For if God is our chief end, then it follows that a correct understanding of his identity is paramount to living for him. Life is all about God, not because of who we are, but because of who God is.

There are two angles of approach in answering why life is all about God. We could approach this issue deductively as Solomon does in the book of Ecclesiastes. Here, he takes note of everything done under the sun and examines

them one by one. His thorough analysis is that every pursuit of humankind is meaningless. He then reasons that humanity should “have reverence for God, and obey his commands, because this is all that we were created for” (Ec 12:13). He arrives at his conclusion deductively.

While this approach is fine, we believe it is inferior and less instructive than the second angle of approach, which is more inductive in nature. You may have already observed that young people generally have no problem acknowledging a higher deity. On a large scale, postmodern thinkers embrace the concept that something else must be out there. Huge disparities quickly appear, however, when we ask them to define that supernatural power. The subjective and relative nature of truth in today’s world encourages teens to create a god suitable to their own palette. The Bible has a term for this: *idolatry*. Observe the second and third commandments in Exodus 20:3-6 and Deuteronomy 5:7-10. To create a god, even in our imagination, is to construct a false one. The result is that many naively worship a god that does not exist, one that is a mere fabrication of individual preference.

Talk about unnerving! Such a scary reality should jolt Christian youth leaders to quick action. We believe that part of what it means to be a Christian is to *believe “Christianly.”* Now, we should avoid judging whether someone is or is not a true follower of Jesus. Only God knows for sure who belongs to him. Nevertheless, it is certainly within the sphere of responsible Christian education to judge, or discern, between Christian beliefs and *non-Christian* ones. Let us make every effort, therefore, to help the young people entrusted to our care to believe “*Christianly*” about God.

With that as a framework, we believe a more helpful approach is to open the Scriptures and allow God’s Word to directly inform who he is and why life is all about him. By tackling the lesson this way, we objectively and inductively teach the truth about God.

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, and participate in doing something during 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, the goal is a complete transformation 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:

Some of us might already know that life should be all about God and his purposes. But the more pressing issue is why would we want to orient our lives around God. That is the question that we will attempt to answer through this study.

Intro Story:

The NBA Finals are the pinnacle of basketball. It is what players dream about. For many, it is the driving motivation of their lives. Cardio and strength training workouts, first-rate nutrition, mindless repetition of fundamental skills, and countless other sacrifices is the price many gladly pay for the slim chance just to play on the game's biggest stage. Coaches evaluate their leadership style and study the game more intensely, all in hopes of gaining the upper edge. Owners strategize to acquire the right combination of talent so they may reach the Big Game. A ring is the goal. Second place is not good enough.

To be crowned the world's best basketball team is certainly a great honor. To win even one championship series would be the crowning moment of any player's career, right?

Think again. The year was 2000. And the Los Angeles Lakers, led by Shaquille O'Neal, were up against Reggie Miller and the Indiana Pacers. It had been 12 years since the Lakers last won a championship, which was a long time considering the elite history of the franchise.

But before the sweat had even dried from his forehead, the 7' 1" center was already looking to next season. Check out what this former military brat had to say moments after winning the coveted NBA Championship, "We're going to win one next year too."¹

We're going to win one next year too? Are you serious?

Why not rest in the moment? Did the championship he had worked so hard for disappoint him? Did it fail to satisfy his God-given sense of purpose? Were we created for championships alone? Or were we created for something, or someone, else? It is these questions we will address with our small groups.

The main point here is that we were created for God. He uniquely designed us for his purposes. Solomon rightly observes that nothing in this world can satisfy that deep longing, or thirst, in our souls for meaning and purpose. We were created for eternity and we long for eternal significance.

¹ To be fair to Shaq, many other champions have made similar comments immediately following successful seasons. Shaq is chosen here to make the point primarily because of his military background. His stepfather was an Army Reservist Sergeant.

Personal Reflection Questions:

Take a shoe or a ball and give it to one student. He or she 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 with all the questions.

1. What do Shaq's comments about winning another championship immediately following his team's first NBA Finals win in 12 years reveal about living life for worldly success?
2. Does he appear satisfied with his team's victory? Why or why not?
3. What are other "crowns" that people work their whole lives to attain?
4. If we were created for eternity, is it possible for anything in this world to fully satisfy us? Why or why not?
5. Since the first century, millions of Christians have given their lives to God. Do you believe these people gave their lives to a worthy cause? Is God worth dying for? Why or why not?

Central Bible Passages:

The following passages are chosen because of their descriptive nature regarding God's divine attributes. If we were created for God, then it is only natural that we learn a little bit more about who it is we're serving. Taken as a whole, these verses paint a picture of God that the human mind simply cannot grasp. God is worth living and dying for precisely because he is so great. These verses are broken up into rough categories for organizational purposes. But you will notice that several of them overlap categories. This is okay because God's divine attributes are not distinct from one another, but intimately related.

*These passages speak to **God's eternity**.*

Isaiah 9:6-7 – *This familiar Christmas passage, as interpreted by Christians, describes Jesus Christ as being eternal. Thus, attributes that can only be used to describe God are made of Christ.*

⁶ A child is born to us! A son is given to us! And he will be our ruler. He will be called, "Wonderful Counselor," "Mighty God," "Eternal Father," "Prince of Peace." ⁷ His royal power will continue to grow; his kingdom will always be at peace. He will rule as King David's successor, basing his power on right and justice, from now until the end of time. The LORD Almighty is determined to do all this.

Psalm 90:1-6 – *God is related to time differently from how we are related to time.*

- ¹ O Lord, you have always been our home.
- ² Before you created the hills
or brought the world into being,
you were eternally God,
and will be God forever.
- ³ You tell us to return to what we were;
you change us back to dust.
- ⁴ A thousand years to you are like one day;
they are like yesterday, already gone,
like a short hour in the night.
- ⁵ You carry us away like a flood;
we last no longer than a dream.
We are like weeds that sprout in the morning,
⁶ that grow and burst into bloom,
then dry up and die in the evening.

Jeremiah 10:10-16 – *This wonderful passage describes God's eternity, power and omniscience.*

- ¹⁰ But you, LORD, are the true God,
you are the living God
and the eternal king.
When you are angry, the world trembles;
the nations cannot endure your anger.
- (¹¹ You people must tell them that the gods who did not make the earth
and the sky will be destroyed. They will no longer exist anywhere on
earth.)
- ¹² The LORD made the earth by his power;
by his wisdom he created the world
and stretched out the heavens.
- ¹³ At his command the waters above the sky roar;
he brings clouds from the ends of the earth.
He makes lightning flash in the rain
and sends the wind from his storeroom.
- ¹⁴ At the sight of this, people feel stupid and senseless;
those who make idols are disillusioned,
because the gods they make are false and lifeless.
- ¹⁵ They are worthless and should be despised;
they will be destroyed when the LORD comes to deal with them.
- ¹⁶ The God of Jacob is not like them;
he is the one who made everything,
and he has chosen Israel to be his very own people.
The LORD Almighty is his name.

*These passages refer to **God's omnipotence** (power).*

Genesis 1:1, 2a – *God has the power to create something from nothing (ex nilio).*

¹ In the beginning, when God created the universe, the earth was formless and desolate.

Genesis 18:14 – *A rhetorical question asked of Abraham by three visitors. It is asked in the context of bringing life from a dead womb.*

¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? As I said, nine months from now I will return, and Sarah will have a son.

Jeremiah 32:17-25 – *A record of Jeremiah's prayer in which he extols God's power.*

¹⁷ "Sovereign LORD, you made the earth and the sky by your great power and might; nothing is too difficult for you. ¹⁸ You have shown constant love to thousands, but you also punish people for the sins of their parents. You are a great and powerful God; you are the LORD Almighty. ¹⁹ You make wise plans and do mighty things; you see everything that people do, and you reward them according to their actions. ²⁰ Long ago you performed miracles and wonders in Egypt, and you have continued to perform them to this day, both in Israel and among all the other nations, so that you are now known everywhere. ²¹ By means of miracles and wonders that terrified our enemies, you used your power and might to bring your people Israel out of Egypt. ²² You gave them this rich and fertile land, as you had promised their ancestors. ²³ But when they came into this land and took possession of it, they did not obey your commands or live according to your teaching; they did nothing that you had ordered them to do. And so you brought all this destruction on them.

²⁴ The Babylonians have built siege mounds around the city to capture it, and they are attacking. War, starvation, and disease will make the city fall into their hands. You can see that all you have said has come true. ²⁵ Yet, Sovereign LORD, you are the one who ordered me to buy the field in the presence of witnesses, even though the city is about to be captured by the Babylonians. "

*These passages speak to **God's omniscience** (knowledge).*

Isaiah 55:8-9 – *God does not know things the way we know things.*

⁸ "My thoughts," says the LORD, "are not like yours, and my ways are different from yours.

⁹ As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways and thoughts above yours."

Psalms 139 – *A whole chapter that highlights the extent of God's knowledge of each individual and the future. It also references other attributes of God.*

¹ LORD, you have examined me and you know me.

² You know everything I do;

from far away you understand all my thoughts.
³ You see me, whether I am working or resting;
you know all my actions.
⁴ Even before I speak,
you already know what I will say.
⁵ You are all around me on every side;
you protect me with your power.
⁶ Your knowledge of me is too deep;
it is beyond my understanding.
⁷ Where could I go to escape from you?
Where could I get away from your presence?
⁸ If I went up to heaven, you would be there;
if I lay down in the world of the dead, you would be there.
⁹ If I flew away beyond the east
or lived in the farthest place in the west,
¹⁰ you would be there to lead me,
you would be there to help me.
¹¹ I could ask the darkness to hide me
or the light around me to turn into night,
¹² but even darkness is not dark for you,
and the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are the same to you.
¹³ You created every part of me;
you put me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴ I praise you because you are to be feared;
all you do is strange and wonderful.
I know it with all my heart.
¹⁵ When my bones were being formed,
carefully put together in my mother's womb,
when I was growing there in secret,
you knew that I was there—
¹⁶ you saw me before I was born.
The days allotted to me
had all been recorded in your book,
before any of them ever began.
¹⁷ O God, how difficult I find your thoughts;
how many of them there are!
¹⁸ If I counted them, they would be more than the grains of sand.
When I awake, I am still with you.
¹⁹ O God, how I wish you would kill the wicked!
How I wish violent people would leave me alone!
²⁰ They say wicked things about you;
they speak evil things against your name.
²¹ O LORD, how I hate those who hate you!

How I despise those who rebel against you!
²² I hate them with a total hatred;
 I regard them as my enemies.
²³ Examine me, O God, and know my mind;
 test me, and discover my thoughts.
²⁴ Find out if there is any evil in me
 and guide me in the everlasting way.

Psalm 147:4 – *God’s knowledge even extends to each individual star.*

⁴ He has decided the number of the stars and calls each one by name.

*These verses speak to **God’s omnipresence** (presence).*

Psalm 139:7-12 – *reference the section above for the actual verses. These six verses best illustrate God’s omnipresence.*

*These passages speak to **God’s omnibenevolence** (goodness).*

1 Chronicles 16:34 – *Everything God does is good because he is wholly good.*

³⁴ Give thanks to the LORD, because he is good; his love is eternal.

Ezra 3:11 – *Israel praises God for his goodness*

¹¹ They sang the LORD's praises, repeating the refrain: “The LORD is good, and his love for Israel is eternal.”

Luke 18:18-19 – *A penetrating question asked by Jesus of a rich young ruler that also contains a theological truth.*

¹⁸ A Jewish leader asked Jesus, “Good Teacher, what must I do to receive eternal life?” ¹⁹ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked him. “No one is good except God alone.”

Life Application:

1. As a result of today’s study, what is something new you learned about God that you did not know?
2. Considering the description of God from the passages above, how does his greatness make you feel?
3. What would you like to have people say about you at your funeral service? How do you want to be remembered after you pass from this earth? What or who would you like to live your life for?
4. Is there anything that concerns you about giving your life to God and his purposes? How can we as a small group encourage one another to live completely for God without turning into weird, obnoxious Jesus freaks?

STUDENT RESPONSE:

1. Describe in your own words why God is so great and why he is worth giving your life for?

2. Which statement best captures where you are with making your life all about God and his purposes? Be honest!
 - a. God seems uninterested in my life. Why should I give my life to him?
 - b. Okay, I'm beginning to understand why God is so great but I'm still not quite ready to give my life to him.
 - c. My desire is to be completely sold out for God, but some things are still holding me back.
 - d. Forget it! God is the last thing on my radar.
 - e. I am very much aware of God's presence of my life and consistently try to make choices that would make him proud.

3. True or False – After this discussion, I feel I need to meet with a leader to discuss some things further.