

HSU
DEVOTIONAL



NAME:

People of Purpose: An Introduction

Passage/Theme: Luke 3:10-11 / Matthew 22:37-39

Have you ever been living your everyday life and come to a moment when you ask yourself, “What is my purpose in life?” This question often leaves people spinning out and trying to figure out their next step. It often changes the way people perceive themselves, leading them to constantly wonder what they should be doing with their life.

Believe it or not, people were asking the same question 2000 years ago when Jesus was walking on this earth. Throughout Jesus’ ministry, we see Him show compassion and love to the marginalized groups of society. He also had the opportunity to teach thousands of people what a true, authentic relationship with God looks like and how to walk in the moment. And even though thousands of people heard Jesus speak, they still had questions about what they should do on this earth—what their purpose in life should be. Jesus’ response to them was simple, and the same truth still stands today.

After the crowd asked John the Baptist in Luke 3:10-11 what they should do to produce good fruit, he essentially answered with what Jesus calls the second Great Commandment in Matthew 22:37-39: To love the people around you and show compassion—to be obedient to the ways the Holy Spirit is going to work through you to bless and show the people around you what true love is—Jesus coming down from heaven to die for your sins.

It’s often easy to get ahead of yourself, especially in the season you are in as a high school student. You are likely weighed down by the everyday business of school, possibly work, and figuring out your future and purpose. But what if you paused for a moment and considered the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus in your life. Let that dictate the way you perceive yourself, your future, the people around you, and the brokenness of the world. Your purpose may not come as easily or clearly as you’d like it to, but here is a promise I can guarantee—being present in your relationship with Jesus will reveal your purpose in ways you never would have imagined.

Tim Litovchenko

Prayer:

Jesus, we are so honored to be called Your children. I am continually humbled and in awe of your amazing sacrifice, God, may I never take it for granted. Jesus, help me walk this earth with Your purpose and be in tune with Your Spirit. Jesus I want to get to know You better—show me how I can recognize Your guidance in situations. Create opportunities for me to share the Gospel with the people that you love—give me eyes to see the brokenness of this world. Amen.

Questions:

What have you considered your purpose in life might be?

How often do you walk in the moment with Jesus?

How have you pursued the purpose God has placed on your heart?

Pursuing People With Purpose

Passage: Philippians 2:1-7

Jesus is the greatest example we could ever have of what it looks like to pursue the people around us with purpose. Jesus chose to leave His throne in heaven to hang out with humans on Earth so that we would have the opportunity to know God personally and have an example of what it looks like to live a life that glorifies God.

Take a moment to really reflect on Philippians 2: 6-8—Jesus chose to leave his throne in heaven, come to Earth, and sacrifice Himself to pursue us! Why would He choose to leave his comfy seat in heaven to enter a dirty, broken world? Because He loved us and believed we were worth pursuing. Philippians 2:5 encourages us to, “have the same mindset as Christ Jesus”. If even Jesus could humble himself to take the nature of a servant, then how much more should we humble ourselves to pursue the people around us?

So as we seek to be people who pursue others with purpose the way Jesus did, I think it's important that we remember HOW Jesus did that. First, He sacrificed comfort to go to where His people were. And second, He knew his purpose—which was ultimately love.

I want to encourage you to think about the people around you and ask God to show you who He wants you to focus on pursuing. Maybe it's a friend or a family member who you know is struggling, maybe it's a specific group of marginalized people in our community (low income kids, homeless men or women, people struggling with addiction), or maybe it's someone from school that you never talk to, but always notice. Then—show up. Fight against the excuses, the awkwardness, the fear and simply choose to show up in their life. And after you show up—love them. The beautiful thing about love is that it can look so many different ways: offering a listening ear, volunteering to serve a meal in the community, inviting someone to church or UNITED. Trust that if you pursue people with purpose by showing up and loving them, God will use you for incredible things.

Ashley Nikonchuk

Prayer:

Jesus—give me eyes to see the people around me that you want me to pursue. Then, give me everything that I need to step outside of my comfort zone to show up and love them. I know that you will make me strong and courageous if I choose to surrender to your will. Continue to expand my heart for the people around me that I would truly become a person of purpose who pursues people like you do! Amen.

Questions:

Reflect on Philippians 2:1-7. Why do you think Jesus chose to take on the nature of a servant?

How did Jesus pursue people with purpose?

What fears keep you from showing up in people's lives?

Pray and ask God to bring to mind someone who He might want you to pursue—write their names here.

Praying With Purpose

Passage: Matthew 6:5-14

One of the best things that comes from faith in Jesus Christ is prayer! Although the idea of prayer may seem simple, it can be confusing and challenging to start praying. No matter where you're at in your faith, here are some explanations that will hopefully make approaching prayer a little easier.

What is prayer? Prayer is a conversation with God. A conversation isn't supposed to be one person doing ALL of the talking. God talks back! Just not in the way we are used to hearing our friends speak. He may speak through feelings, thoughts, or He may orchestrate events. There are many ways He can answer! Ask him to speak to you, and wait. But always check what you think you're hearing against the Bible, God will never tell you anything contrary to His written Word.

How do we pray? In Matthew 6:5-14, we see Jesus give us an explanation on how to pray and how not to pray. He recommends the person praying find a closed room to pray alone. This isn't to say praying with a group or in public is bad, but He is telling us to go into an undistracted place of humility before the Lord. He calls out public prayer because people were doing it to show off, and Jesus ain't about that. If that's a problem, go do the opposite. He also calls out pagan-like prayer. The people of pagan religions prayed to false gods by repeating the same phrases, hoping it would make a difference. He wants you to be authentic in your words and take the time to say what you truly mean.

What is the Lord's Prayer for? In this passage we see the very famous Lord's Prayer. The purpose of this prayer was to give an example of how to pray. It is a prayer that declares God's status and role as Father, and makes requests in confidence and faith in Him. God is worthy of our praise, and loves us deeply, so it is always good to remind ourselves by telling Him that.

I hope this helps make prayer more approachable. God is ready and excited to speak with you!

Mikey Nikonchuk

Prayer:

Jesus, help me to be selfless in prayer. Give me the patience to listen for Your voice—help me to be less selfish. God, I long for You, give me the boldness to approach You in confidence and faith. Jesus You are so worthy, let me approach our time together as a conversation rather than a transaction. I confess God that I have sometimes prayed selfishly for my own desires. Would my desires reflect Your will for my life. Jesus, humble me so that I may draw even closer to You. Amen.

Questions:

What is your experience with prayer?

What do you notice Jesus pray for in the Lord's Prayer?

How does it feel knowing that God is excited to speak with you?

Loving With Purpose

Passage: 1 John 4:7-8

Have you ever thought about what true love looks like? I often consider the ways I interact with people and ask myself—do I really truly love every single person I interact with? Jesus is inspiring to me because of His unique ability to make EACH person seen, regardless of their circumstances, looks, or public status. Jesus was revolutionary because of the way He loved and who He loved.

God loves each human being, He has uniquely created you and every single person. I often struggle to love every person I meet like Jesus does. I sometimes get carried away with business and don't pause to recognize or make the person in front of me feel seen. It's amazing to me how Jesus was able to be so aware and present in the moment. Every single person He interacted with had their life transformed.

God is love, He showed his complete love for you and me through His son Jesus. When was the last time you felt seen and loved by someone? I often remind myself that I don't need to complete a task list for God to love me, that He has already taken up the sins of the world unto Himself. That is the beauty of the Gospel. I like to place myself in the arms of Jesus and be reminded of His love. Without experiencing and understanding the ultimate display of love from God, we will struggle to love the people we interact with. It's sometimes difficult to love someone when you don't know what will happen or if they will respond. Although it may be very difficult at times, just know that Jesus is walking right next to you, ready to work through you to love someone every day. The beauty and purpose of Jesus' love is to show compassion to His people.

Throughout this week, I would encourage you to pause and consider how unconditional the love of Jesus is. Take a moment to rest and reflect on this simple truth—we love because He first loved us. Pray for God to place someone on your heart this week to love unconditionally.

Tim Litovchenko

Prayer:

Jesus, I thank You for Your unconditional love. God, I am in awe of the ways You chose to love each person in this world. Jesus, help me love the people around me like You do. Show me the people You would like me to extend my hand to and see them where they are at. Jesus, give me the boldness to love like You do in every intentional moment I have with people. Amen.

Questions:

What has your personal experience been with love?

How can you rest in the fact that you are loved by Jesus?

Who is God placing on your heart to love? Where have you seen Jesus love people through your obedience?

Our Calling and Our Purpose

Passage: Matthew 28:18-20 (The Great Commission)

For most of my life, the biggest question always present in my mind was, “what is my calling?” or, “what am I meant to do?” This is something that emerges in most people’s minds the very moment they are asked as a child what it is that they want to do when they grow up. From a young age there is an idea involuntarily put upon us that we need to figure out a plan for the rest of our lives. We need to know what we are going to do after high school, what career we will pursue, when we are going to get married, have a family, and buy a house. It is no wonder to me why all of us in the younger generations are always so stressed about what we are doing.

The scariest thing about this is that we grow up used to the stress and accept it as a part of life. But there is hope. Despite the world saying that we have to figure out all of these things by the time we finish high school, Jesus doesn’t say anything of the sort. In fact, Jesus actually says something that is simpler and much more purposeful. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gives His disciples the Great Commission and tells us to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations. So essentially, He says that our calling is to tell people about the one who loves them the most, and lead them into a relationship with Him. God has His universal will for all believers laid out in Scripture, it is clear that He is more concerned about who we are than what we do for a living.

How we help lead people to Him is something He actually leaves up to us. This is because He has wired each and every one of us in a unique and special way, and wants us to explore the giftings He has put inside us in ways that glorify Him in order that others may be shown the light of Jesus! When we walk in our calling, we are intentionally pursuing our passions so that others may come to know Jesus!

Logan Nelson

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, slow down my heart and my mind so that I may turn my ear towards You and listen to the words You have to speak to me. I have been worried about the things the world has asked of me, and have taken my eyes away from what You have for me. Holy Spirit, stir up my passions so that I can seek out ways to glorify You in how You have designed me. Jesus, may opportunities arise throughout my daily life where I have the opportunity to share Your love and Your light with those around me. Jesus, I thank you for being the way, and the light, and the life that fills me up and restores me.

Grant me peace in any future decisions I have to make, and may I be reminded that You are with me always! Amen.

Questions:

Why is the Gospel something that needs to be shared? What is so important about it?

What is a passion you have, and how do you think you could use it to share the Gospel with others?

Who is a person who you would want to share the message of Jesus with? Start sharing the Gospel by praying for and affirming them with the things that Jesus says about them: they are loved, they are known, they are fearfully and wonderfully made, that there is hope, etc.

Living With Purpose

Passage: 2 Timothy 1:8-10

Truly living every day of your life with purpose can be a difficult discipline. Living in the light of the Gospel with Jesus can often feel difficult as well. The beauty of living out the purpose that Jesus has for you is that it allows you to find freedom in your daily walk with God, it removes your self-placed expectations to be perfect and allows you to accept the Gospel for what it is: a message of hope for all broken people.

My life has been filled with so much purpose since I gave my life to Christ. My desire is to continue to grow my relationship with Jesus, to see a glimpse of Him in every day that I walk with Him. I am continually learning to lean in towards Jesus and trust Him to give me a picture of His purpose for my life. Grace has changed the way I live my life—the Gospel has transformed my mind, heart and soul.

Living in light of the Gospel changes everything from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to bed. You find freedom in the little moments of life, you are able to utilize your unique gifts and abilities, you are able to have the joy of the Lord in your life, and you trust God with the ultimate call that He has placed on your heart.

Lastly, in the little moments that you have through the day, you may find yourself experiencing life to the fullest. In the midst of chaos in this season, find ways to go back to your purpose—utilizing your passions to preach the Gospel that has changed your life and is going to change the lives of the people around you.

Jesus coming to bring hope to the world is the message that has not and will not change. Living your life in light of this hope gives you the freedom to love and serve the people around you in a way that is revolutionary. It allows you to have enough freedom to be bold in communities you never thought you would be in. Find freedom in truth and see the way that Jesus works through your daily experiences.

Tim Litovchenko

Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for coming down to earth to teach me about loving and serving people. God, I pray that You continue to reveal Your purpose for me in my daily life. I want to find freedom in following You. Oh God—help me recognize Your voice and wisdom. Jesus, help me see past my personal desires in my daily life, and instead fill me with the purpose that You have for my life. Amen.

Questions:

How would you describe the quality of your life at this moment?

What is the simple truth of the Gospel? How can you remind yourself of that?

In what ways can you pursue the freedom of Jesus this week?

Worshipping With Purpose

Passage: Romans 12:1-2 (Worship as a position of the heart)

For some people who have been around a church environment for a long time, there are seasons in which singing songs on a Sunday morning can become stale. Sometimes it feels like we are repeating the same words, over and over again. What was once exciting (and maybe a little awkward) when we were learning to worship and sing the songs, can reach a point where it doesn't "feel" like anything is happening. What this can mean is that we have come to a point where we are missing an essential ingredient to worship. Maybe I am the only one who has experienced this, but throughout my time knowing Jesus it has happened more times than I would care to admit. In all of these instances, there is a common trait, and that is that my heart was no longer in the songs I sang.

Romans 12:1 says that we are to give ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, and that THIS is true worship. Now what does this mean? In this scripture, Paul is asking the early church to worship with the entirety of their lives. Worship is not just the occasional songs that we sing but how we go about our day. Worship comes from the position of our hearts. That is why the songs we sing on Sunday mornings or evenings at UNITED can feel like empty words coming out of our mouths; if our hearts are not intentionally in a position of thankfulness and love for God, then they truly are just words.

It is when we engage with God and offer ourselves up to Him that we begin to worship. That is why when we sing songs, the words within them reflect this position of the heart and offer assistance for us to express this to Him. This is also why there are different positions of worship, you may see people lift up their hands, bow down, clap, yell out in joy, or even grow silent. All of them are ways in which people offer themselves to God and into what He has for them.

Logan Nelson

Prayer:

Jesus, I offer myself to You today, completely, as a living sacrifice for You. Lord, I am thankful for all You have done, are doing, and will do, even when I do not understand what You are doing or why. Father, I trust You even when it is hard, and simply ask to know more of You. Holy Spirit, loosen my grip on the things I struggle to give up to You, and encourage and aid me in finding more of the love, joy, peace, and hope that You have for me. Amen.

Questions:

What is something you enjoy about worship?

What is something you don't understand about worship?
Ask your leader about it!

Have you ever come to a point where it felt difficult to worship?

Why is God deserving of our worship and praise?

Pursuing Jesus With Purpose

Passage: Revelation 3:20

Have you ever felt like your relationship with Jesus has been filled with complacency? I often reflect back to the times I felt like I struggled to grow in my relationship with Jesus—that did I not read the Bible or pray enough. I believe that we go through seasons where Jesus opens up new experiences and allows us to see more and more glimpses of Him.

I hope I never get to the place in my heart where I think that I have “arrived.” I hope I never think that I have Jesus figured out. I have found that throughout my life Jesus has waited to connect with me. I remember scheduling times in my day to spend time with Jesus; I would just listen and be so satisfied in my time with Him. Revelation 3:20 says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

The beauty of Jesus is that he is consistently knocking on the door of your heart. He desires to be in relationship with you—God delights in your presence. That simple truth can bring freedom to your time with Jesus.

Having consistency in your pursuit of Jesus is important. It doesn't have to be an obligation to consider, but rather a discipline to develop. And not because you feel like this needs to be done, but because you WANT to. Pray to have a desire to meet with Jesus, to have continual conversation with the God of the universe. To truly believe and grasp the immense delight that Jesus has for His time with you.

My prayer for you this week is that you may be so in tune with Jesus that you can experience and see a new glimpse of Him. I pray that you feel pursued by Jesus and that you choose to pursue Him in return. Find consistency to spend time with Jesus and you may be surprised to see Him waiting for you.

Tim Litovchenko

Prayer:

Jesus, I pray for my relationship with You. Help me recognize Your voice and continually have the desire to grow in a relationship with You. God, I am in awe of the ways You pursued me and continue to pursue me. You have changed my life from day one, remove any complacency from my heart. Create in me a desire to grow and be passionate for Your presence, Jesus. You are the way and truth God and I am blessed by the ways that You knock on the door of my heart every day. May I never forget the sacrifice You made for me, Jesus. Amen.

Questions:

What has your one-on-one experience with Jesus been like?

Where have you seen Jesus meet with you this past week?

How do you think you can pursue Jesus without getting complacent?

Speaking With Purpose

Passage: Ezekiel 37: 4-10 (Valley of Dry Bones)

There is a saying out there that says, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” I would like to clarify that this statement is one big lie. In fact, in many instances words can do more damage than any stick or stone could ever do. Words have an intuition about them that makes them powerful, volatile even. They can result in either tearing you down, not having any effect, or they can speak life into you and fill you with encouragement. Words can help us gain a clear idea of who we are and who God is, or they can be used to fill our minds with lies and discouragement.

This is why if we know Jesus, we are to speak with purpose. The words we have to share with others, to their face and apart from them, are words that should build others up, encourage them, and speak truth into their lives. Not the truth that our opinions form, but the truth of what God says about all of His dearly loved children. For a long time, the words that others said about me formed how I viewed myself, and because of that the word “rat” became ascribed to my identity. It was only until people from UNITED started to call me “dearly loved, chosen, and a Child of God,” that this lie that I was a rat was torn away and destroyed.

In Ezekiel 37:4-10, we see the full power that God can put into spoken words. When Ezekiel talks to Him, and God gives Ezekiel the words to say to the dry bones, we see that life is literally spoken into the dry bones of Israel. There is meaning in what we say, and since that same God who spoke life into those dry bones lives in us through the Holy Spirit, it is important that we listen to His promptings as we never know when He might have something for us to tell another that may change their lives or even just give them the encouragement they need to get through the day.

Logan Nelson

Prayer:

Jesus, I thank You for Your sacrifice that has forgiven my sins and drawn me into Your family and a personal relationship with You. Because of Your love for me, let my words flow out towards others with kindness, truth, wisdom, and encouragement. Holy Spirit, move in me to acknowledge the purpose behind the words You want me to say and make them evident to me in the conversations I have with loved ones and strangers alike. Heavenly Father, I love You and thank You for making me a Child of God! Amen.

Questions:

What is the most encouraging thing someone has ever told you?

In what ways have people used words to tear you down? Why are these things that people have said not from God?

What are some things we could tell people that would build them up?

Pray and ask God about a specific person and if there is any truth or encouragement that He would like you to tell them.

Resources

As followers of Jesus we strive to be *people of purpose*, so we put together this resource list to give you some ideas. Included in this list are some of CTK's local partners and specific ways you can help each of them. Each description is simplified, so please visit their individual websites or ctkserves.org for more info. Not every suggestion will be possible for every person, but it's a great way to start considering how you can live out Jesus' command to love your neighbor as yourself.

Bellingham Food Bank (www.bellinghamfoodbank.org)

- Sign up to volunteer packing and/or distributing food boxes
- Donate non-perishable food items

Blue Skies for Children (www.blueskiesforchildren.org)

- Donate a gently used musical instrument
- Donate office supplies
- Donate new socks to the Shoe Give Program
- Donate a brand new backpack to the Backpack Program
- Donate a warm coat, hat, gloves, scarf or blanket to the Winter Warm Up Program
- Donate a gift card to Office Max/Office Depot, Staples, or Fred Meyer
- Fundraise to raise money for Blue Skies
- Consign clothing at Wee Ones or the Clothes Rack in Blue Skies' name
- Sign up to sponsor a child

Cascade Connections (cascadeconnections.org)

- Link your Fred Meyer or Amazon Smile account to Cascade
- Sign up to Volunteer

Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS) (dvsas.org)

- Apply to be a volunteer (24-hour helpline, work with children, etc.)
- Mention DVSAS when you consign to Wee Ones or Labels
- Donate items from the Safe Housing Needs list

Engedi Refuge (engedirefuge.com)

- Donate a \$10 gift card to Walmart, Hobby Lobby, or Target for the “Treasure Chest”
- Donate food items that are always needed: French Vanilla liquid coffee creamer, canned fruit, honey, canned soups, cold cereal, spaghetti sauce, sugar, & quinoa
- Donate household items that are always needed: bath sponges, toilet paper, paper towels, fabric softener sheets, Wet Swiffer mop refills, Lysol cleaning wipes, laundry detergent (non-bleach or chlorine)

Lighthouse Mission (thelighthousemission.org)

- Apply to volunteer at the Mission (Base Camp, Agape Home, etc.)
- Serve at the Mission for academic credit (May be on hold due to COVID, contact Hannah at the Mission for more information)
- Donate food (Kitchen wish list: Hot cocoa, ground beef, apples, oranges, bananas, fresh produce, coffee & seafood)
- Donate clothing and toiletry items that are in good condition (temporarily on hold due to COVID)

Lydia Place (lydiaplace.org)

- Sign up for the Lydia Place news letter to keep up with what’s going on in their organization and how you can help
- Sign up to volunteer for ongoing or one-time opportunities
- Mention Lydia Place when you donate household items to Habitat for Humanity and they will receive a credit
- Donate items from their Welcome Home Essentials list (on website)
- Donate essentials for newborn & school-age children (on website)
- Donate vocational & personal growth tools (wall calendars, planners, & coffee gift cards)

Whatcom County Pregnancy Clinic (whatcomclinic.com)

- Sign up to volunteer for various positions

