

Help Your Teenagers Find Purpose and Set Goals



"Purpose" is a buzzword in many churches these days, as Christians explore what it means to live intentionally. God has a purpose, or plan, for each of our lives. Teenagers also must discover their particular purpose and find ways to live it out.

Coming up with a mission statement is a helpful first step. You can even do this together as a family. For Christians, a mission statement will revolve around faith and service, but it also can include your passions and dreams. Brainstorm a sentence or two dealing with each of these areas: mind, body, heart, and spirit.

Another way to explore your purpose is asking, "What do you stand for?" Our culture encourages today's teenagers to stand for riches and fame, but Jesus calls his followers to deny and humble themselves. He calls us to "produce lasting fruit" (John 15:16). Our lives should reflect the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

After teenagers discover their purpose, they can set goals for achieving it. If goals are to be meaningful, kids must set them themselves. Counselor Steve Merritt, writing in *Group Magazine*, defines goals as "good things we can bring about ourselves, as long as we do it without control or manipulation." All parents desire good things for our teenagers, but we can't always be involved in making them happen. Kids must be passionate about their own goals and self-motivated about reaching them. And for goals to be God-pleasing, we must reach them in ways that honor him. Keep reading to learn more about purpose and goals.

People of all ages wonder, "What's my purpose in life?" Author Katie Brazelton offers six principles for journeying from emptiness to purposefulness:

- 1. Step toward the pathway.** The most important step is the first one. If you're looking for purpose, start your journey.
- 2. Never walk alone.** A close friend who offers objective counsel can keep you on track, especially when you want to stop.
- 3. Follow in Jesus' footsteps.** The Lord is our salvation and shepherd, and he's also the example we're to follow. Jesus always stayed "on task." His focus was clear.
- 4. Go the extra mile.** Your pathway to purpose will probably take longer than you'd thought. Keep walking, and stay the course.
- 5. Run to Jesus.** He cares for you and wants you to find purpose. He'll be waiting for you at the end of your quest. Use his presence as your incentive to keep pressing on.
- 6. Point others to the pathway.** Share your discovery and excitement with others you care about.



Here are some snapshots of what today's teenagers and young people strive for:

- When 4,600 kids ages 12 to 19 were asked about their life goals, the top response (86%) was "enjoy life." Other top vote-getters were "have good relationships with friends and family" (82%), "get married" (78%), "make lots of money" (73%), "have children" (72%), and "travel" (65%).
(Mediamark Research)

- When almost 600 young people ages 18 to 25 were surveyed about their generation's top goals, the top response was "to get rich" (81%). Next was "to be famous" (51%), "to help people who need help" (30%), "to be leaders in their community" (22%), and "to become more spiritual" (10%).
(Pew Research Center)



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Use these discussions starters to help teenagers think about their life's purpose and goals.

1. What would you say you stand for, and why? How might some of your peers answer this question?
2. Do you already know the purpose that God has for your life? Explain.
3. What are some of your short- and long-term goals? How do you plan to reach each of them?
4. What would make a good mission statement for your life? for our family?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. Your teenagers realize that their true purpose comes from God.
2. God will reveal to your teenagers his special plan for their lives.
3. Your teenagers will set goals that honor God and will be motivated to work hard to meet those goals.
4. God will use your teenagers to reveal his purpose to other people.

Verse of the Month

"I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us." (Philippians 3:13-14)

Earthly goals are important, but there's only one thing that truly matters: that we have faith in Jesus as our Savior and life forever in heaven with him. No matter what other goals we set, that eternal goal should be at the forefront of our lives and affect everything else we do.

What's Up With Kids

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, youth minister Danny Bowers uses the acronym **G.R.O.W.** to explore healthy, growing ministries. His points apply to healthy, growing young people, as well.

G = GOALS

Teenagers need something they're working to accomplish. The list could be endless, but when we set goals, we need to know that they are attainable and reachable.

R = REALITY

This is the gut-check after you set your goals. You have to know your starting point, as well as the foundation you have to work with. Sometimes the reality check can be encouraging, frustrating, or scary. But remember, it just gives you a place to start, not a finish.

O = OPPORTUNITIES & OPTIONS

This is your brainstorming attack session. How will the goals stimulate you to move forward? The "how do we get there?" is up in the air. I love allowing a "sky is the limit" type thinking because of the amount of excitement that can be built and used to move forward. Look at the resources or people available to help you reach your goals. Sometimes your options may seem inadequate or nonexistent, but remember that we do the possible; God takes care of the impossible.

W = WHAT'S NEXT?

Many of us can get stuck when we put our thoughts to the future. As we set goals, we have to think where we're ultimately going. What do we need to prepare ourselves for? None of us sets goals and expect them NOT to be obtained. Why put forth the energy if we aren't going to do what it takes to make it work? Many times we may have to become flexible and make adjustments along the way. There's no steadfast rule that once a goal is set, it's set in stone. Flexibility and creativity are key.



MUSICSPOTLIGHT



Mainstream Artist

Background: These three brothers, ages 16 to 21, have been performing together for many years. The pop singers also have enjoyed successful acting careers. The band now has a second No. 1 album. In 2008, the Jonas Brothers were nominated for a Grammy for Best New Group.

Albums: *Lines, Vines, and Trying Times* (2009), *A Little Bit Longer* (2008), *It's About Time* (2006)

What Parents Should Know: The brothers, whose father was a pastor, all have publicly vowed to abstain from sex until marriage. Kevin recently announced his engagement. The Jonas Brothers have donated millions of dollars to charities.

What the Jonas Brothers Say: They're able to blow off criticism and ridicule. Joe says, "People don't realize that when they're making fun of us, we're laughing, too." Kevin adds, "At the end of the day, I know who I am as a person."

Discussion Questions: What kinds of pressures do you think the Jonas Brothers face? How are they similar to or different from the pressures you face every day? Read Psalm 72:12-14. Why and how does God take on the pressures you encounter? How exactly do you hand over your pressures to God—and how can you tell you've done it?

Christian Artist

Background: This band from Texas has been around since 2004, when 16-year-old Leeland Mooring and his band caught the ear of some studio executives. Their debut album garnered a Grammy nomination and five Dove nominations.

Albums: *Love Is On the Move* (2009), *Opposite Way* (2008), *Sound of Melodies* (2006)

What Parents Should Know: Leeland is a shining example for teenagers, who might feel they can't accomplish much due to their age. Here's a guy who had a wildly successful album although he was barely old enough to drive.

What Leeland Says: "It's not age that God sees. If you've got a hunger for God, it doesn't matter how much talent you have. It doesn't matter how old you are or how experienced you are in certain areas. It really just comes down to you having a passion for God and wanting to know the Lord."

Discussion Questions: What are you passionate about? Is it wrong to be passionate about things besides God? Explain. Read Galatians 1:13-14. Before meeting Jesus, what was Paul passionate about? How did becoming passionate about Jesus change Paul and the world? What "fruit" has your passion for God produced so far in your life?

FILMWATCH

Movie: *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*

Genre: Action-Adventure

Rating: PG-13 (for intense sequences of sci-fi action violence, language, some crude and sexual material, and brief drug material)

Synopsis: The heroic Autobots once again team up with Sam Witwicky (Shia LaBeouf) and a covert military team to defeat the evil Decepticons. While there are more robots this time (yay!), director Michael Bay really ramps up the crudity and sexism in this outing (boo!). It's a definite devolution of the mythology.

Discussion Questions: Do you believe in fate? Is fate just another name for God? Why or why not? How do you feel about the line "Fate rarely calls upon us at a time of our choosing"? Read Romans 8:28-31. What do these verses say about fate? Do you feel "chosen" by God? How can you know God's plans for you?



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