



All Christians' Fellowship International

INTERACTIVE SUNDAY SCHOOL OUTLINE FOR YOUTHS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Foundations Made For More

Overview

Summary

In this second lesson of the Foundations series, we will consider how the Christian faith frames human identity and purpose. To be human is to have desires, and we easily desire wrong things that do not satisfy. But our desires and needs show us true longing and our need for God. When we step out of the cave into light, we learn that only God can satisfy us and give us true identity. We all have purpose because we are created to image God, and the image of God teaches us that all human persons are worthy to be treated with dignity.

Key Takeaways

1. We all want something.
2. The things of this world will not satisfy.
3. We are only satisfied by God.

Scriptures

Ecclesiastes 2:1,4,8-11 / Ephesians 2:10 / Genesis 1:26-27 / 1 Peter 2:19

Lesson 2 Script

Introduction

I want you to take a moment and picture in your mind a super successful person. Now, whatever you're imagining... take another moment and kick it up a notch. What's the most successful life you can dream up? [Pause briefly to allow some good mental images.] What did you envision? Success that is defined by and provided by finances? Did you picture multiple cars, luxury homes, private flights, couture clothing, perfectly curated social media?

These kinds of physical things with great monetary value frame how we are often taught to define success. Society tells us that money, popularity, and achievements are what we need to be a happy person and live a good life. But it turns out that most of those things are just shadows on the cave walls, like in Plato's allegory from last week. The writer of Ecclesiastes knew all about these shadows. He described his life lived chasing them as **meaningless— like chasing the wind.** (**Ecclesiastes 2:11**)

Transition

Most of us feel the pressure to achieve. Whether it's living up to our parents' standards, getting good grades, or being popular online, we think that doing, having, or being will make us feel complete. But the Bible teaches us that the only way we can feel complete and satisfied is in God. Having a relationship with God is the way to be made whole.

Do you find yourself wrestling with your desire to be content? Have you ever wondered if you were created with a purpose or why you even exist? Christianity teaches that we were made for more than the shadows, more than chasing some high we can never reach. We're made for more than just the exhausting competition of trying to be the best and have the most.

God didn't create us to watch us struggle and wonder about the meaning of life. God created us to be in relationship with him, with each other, and with the world around us. And God didn't just make humanity like everything else... we're created specially. Genesis 1 teaches us that God designed us in his own image!

So, let's dive into it! What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be created in the image of God? And what does it mean for you?

Let's start with the basics...

Point #1: We all want something.

Can you tell me something, anything, you currently want? If I offered to buy you anything right now, what would you like to have? [Perhaps let a few students share.] We almost always want something. We are often obsessed with wanting new stuff. But we desire more than just stuff. We crave things that money can't buy. We crave relationships and acceptance. We crave skills and opportunities. We want happiness and pleasure. None of these things are inherently bad.

What we really crave above all else is meaning. We have a need to know who we are and what our place in the world is. We want connections that give us purpose. We desire a sense of belonging and feeling like we matter. We have these longings because God has created us to need him. Have you ever heard that life without Jesus is like a donut? You've got a hole in the middle of your heart! If we don't find our purpose in God, we'll spend our lives trying to fill the void with things that just don't fit quite right.

Having desires is not inherently wrong. But our desires easily go wrong when we point them in the wrong direction. The fact that we have a restless craving in our hearts for something that can't be satisfied by worldly pleasures is evidence that there's something – or someone – beyond this world that we were made for. Saint Augustine put it this way in Confessions: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." Just like we hunger because God designed us to eat food, we desire fulfillment because God designed us to be fulfilled...and God is the one who fulfills us! When we desire God first in our lives, we then learn how to desire the good life and the good things God has for us.

Have you thought much, not just about things you want but, about what you want out of life or what kind of life you want? Do you want a life that is only defined by money or success? Don't you want to live a life such that at the end of it, God can say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant"? That kind of life achievement is only found when we pursue God's kingdom, which leads us to a bummer of a next point...

Point #2: The things of this world will not keep us satisfied.

Have you ever been disappointed after getting something you really wanted? *[Maybe share a personal story here.]* The newness of things can wear off quite fast. We just know that these shoes, or this phone, or that relationship is going to make us feel very happy and satisfied... and sometimes they do! But never for long. There is always something else that comes along next, something shinier and better than we've got. Fads come and go. Even when we achieve them, they leave us looking for what's next. Obtaining the latest cool thing is like grasping at smoke: Just when you think you've got it... you come up empty.

Could you imagine if you ever actually got everything you ever wanted? This happened for the writer of Ecclesiastes, and he told the truth about it. He said,

I said to myself, "Come on, let's try pleasure. Let's look for the 'good things' in life." But I found that this, too, was meaningless.

I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire!

So, I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me. Anything I wanted; I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. But as I looked at everything, I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere. **Ecclesiastes 2:1, 4, 8-11**

Listen to this guy – he was a king, but, like you and me, he still craved a sense of meaning and purpose for his life. And he searched for that meaning everywhere. He tried finding it in pleasure... the best food and drink, the best entertainment, the most sex and romance, all the comforts royalty could buy. But the meaning wasn't there. So he stopped fooling around with pleasure and turned to building a legacy – accumulating property, putting his name on gardens and parks – but the meaning wasn't there. He was greater than any king before him, he had wisdom, he had wealth, he had work ethic – but still, at the end of his life, he looked back and concluded, "It was all so meaningless – like chasing the wind."

The pleasures that the world can give us, even when they are good things, are just fleeting shadows when we try to possess them apart from God. God's love for us is not a fad that will go out of style next season or be followed by its next generation model. We must find our worth, identity, and fulfillment in God who never changes. This isn't just about where we're going in life... this is about where we came from and why we are here. This leads to the good news of...

Point #3: We are only satisfied by God.

The Bible doesn't teach that God just puts up with humanity. Rather, the Bible teaches that God loves us, enjoys us, and wants to be in relationship with us because God has created us! Not only do we exist because of God's creating, God is recreating us all the time. We are each like pieces of art that God is continually shaping. **Ephesians 2:10** says, *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

God has created all things, and God doesn't create things without a purpose. And the Bible teaches us that humanity was made with a special purpose. We call this the image of God. Let's hear what **Genesis 1:26-27** says:

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

So, God created human beings in his own image.
In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

This means you aren't random; your life isn't pointless, you're not made only to lead a boring, purposeless life. You have value and a calling. We were all created to work with God in the world as his image bearers! This means that we can live like mirrors, reflecting the goodness of God to the world around us. God has fashioned us in a way that is not identical to him but can resemble him, like a family resemblance. According to the Christian faith, this means that every individual, regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability, or social class, has infinite value in God's eyes because they bear his image. He created each of us intentionally and for a purpose! So let's sum things up by understanding something important...

Closing

Understanding that God made humanity in his image doesn't just teach us to value ourselves; it teaches us to love other people. As Christians we believe that every single person in the world comes from God, is loved by God, and therefore is worthy of dignity and life outside of the cave. In the light of Christ, we live as God's representatives in the world. When we are stuck in the cave, we become selfish and hyper-focused on trying to meet our own needs and greedy desires. But when we are people of the light, we think about other's needs, too.

Because of Christianity's unique view on humanity, Christians have done and do some pretty great things in the world. It was Christians who started hospitals. Christians who started orphanages and foster care. Christians in this country started movements for equal rights. Some people think that everyone deserves to be miserable, and the whole world is just terrible, that a just world isn't worth fighting for. Yet 1 Peter 2:9-10 tells us:

But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

“Once you had no identity as a people;
Now you are God's people.
Once you received no mercy;
Now you have received God's mercy.”

We are God's people. We belong to God. We are God's good creation, recreated for his purpose in Christ Jesus. Do you believe this about yourself? What might really believing this change about how you live your life? The perfect grades, the perfect job, the perfect spouse, the perfect picture... they are all just grasping at smoke, chasing the wind. We can let go of striving for perfection and take up desiring the good things God has for us, letting God fill us with his love, his joy, and his peace, no matter the circumstances around us.

The good life exists. Do you want it?

Discussion Questions

1. Why did God create humans?
2. In Genesis 1:26, what do you think it means for people to “reign” over creation?
3. The Bible tells us our identity is received from God, not achieved by ourselves. As a believer, how should it change the way we live?
4. In Ecclesiastes, the king describes his search for meaning “like chasing the wind.” What does that comparison tell us about life lived apart from God?
5. We live in a world of comparisons that leave us chasing shadows and feeling worthless. Why do you compare yourself to others? Why shouldn't you?
6. In 1 Peter, what is the darkness that God calls us out of? What does it mean to live life in God’s “wonderful light”?
7. Have you ever been troubled by the feeling that life is "meaningless"? How does the Christian faith offer hope?
8. How could you actively help people in your life know God and who God made them to be?