

Lesson 1 – The Purpose of Man’s Existence

Grades 6-8

Lesson Preparation:

Read Lesson 1 in the Baltimore Catechism. Find some advertisements from magazines, newspapers, Web sites, etc. Choose those ads that you can easily contrast with God's vision of what we ought to value. Be careful to only choose ads that contain appropriate images and language. You will also need drawing / coloring materials for the activity at the end.

Opening Prayer:

Scripture: “See what love the Father has bestowed on us, that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.” 1Jn. 3:1

Leader: Father, open our hearts so we can know You better. Help us to understand your purpose for us and how much You love us. And give us the grace to always be pleasing to You. Amen.

Together: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolations, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Opening:

Explain to the students that you will be discussing the purpose of Man's existence today. It is important to know the purpose of anything we use. Without knowing what something is for, we can not know how to use it properly. If we don't know what our lives are for, how can we live them properly? There are many different voices that try to tell us what the purpose of our existence is. Often, these voices don't sound very much like God's Voice.

Show the students pictures from magazine advertisements. Ask them what each advertisement is suggesting about the purpose of Man's existence.

In general, what do these advertisements want us to believe is the meaning of life? Is their voice speaking the truth? Does this sound like God's vision of the purpose for Man's existence?

Watch the Lesson 1 Video on Catholic Brain

Comprehension Questions: *Note: These questions are asked after the video, just to check student comprehension. They are not discussion questions, but be sure students understand the answers to these questions before moving on*

1) Who made us?

God made us.

2) Why did God make us?

Purely out of love. God was not lacking anything, but He made us to show His goodness, and so we could be with Him forever in Heaven.

3) What must we do to attain Heaven?

We must know, love, and serve God.

4) Who teaches us to know, love, and serve God?

The Catholic Church

5) What prayer, dating back to the Apostles, contains the chief truths of our Faith?

The Apostles' Creed

Discussion Questions: *Note: These questions are for student discussion. The students should consider these questions and comment on them. There are some key points included in this lesson, after each question, that you can use to help guide their discussion toward truth. It's important that the students think about and discuss these things, but that they don't leave the discussion with false impressions about what is true.*

1) How can we summarize the purpose of Man's existence?

At some point in the discussion, the classic answer should arise: The purpose of life is to know, to love, and to serve God in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in Heaven. Write it on the board. (Note: This is a statement you should return to from time to time to be sure students remember it.)

2) St. Augustine said, “You made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” What does this statement tell us about the purpose of Man’s existence?

Everyone is created with a need and desire for God. When people try to fill that desire with other things, their hearts are restless. It is only in God that our hearts can be truly satisfied.

Go Deeper:

Read to the class the following quote from Pope St. John Paul II: “Man can not live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself. His life is senseless if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”

Discussion:

How does this quote from John Paul II support the classic definition of the purpose of Man's existence?

(Example: Because God is love, to know God is to know love. How well do we live? Well, how well do we love – first God, and then our neighbor?)

Activity:

Using the attached templates, have students draw images that represent each of the parts of the Apostles’ Creed. *Note: If your students do not have much of a religious education background, you may need to help them with this or save this activity for later in the year.* You can post these in the classroom as tools to help students learn the prayer. They can also be used for games. For example, you can cover up the written portion of the Creed on the bottom, and have students figure it out from the drawing. Or you can mix them up (or hand one randomly to each student) and have students order them properly. Use your imagination!

Closing Prayer:

Leader: Thank You, Lord, for bringing us together in your presence. Thank You for loving us, and for creating us out of love. Thank You for giving us the desire to love You, and for fulfilling that desire. Help us to know You, love You, and serve You, and reign with You forever in Heaven. Amen.

Together: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.