

Graduation—Then What?

We can glorify and serve God through many different careers.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Colossians 3:1-3, 17; Proverbs 15:22; Romans 12:3-8

The church at Colossae contained many Gentile converts with no past history of acknowledging God as Father. So the writer to the Colossians had to lead them to a new level of understanding. The writer helped them understand the Christian's responsibility as a member of God's family (**Colossians 3:1-3**). All their thoughts and actions were to be "set" on things above rather than earthly motivations and desires. "Set" means "to seek or strive for earnestly." Fixing their thoughts on heavenly things means each believer is to let every aspect of his or her life, including choices and actions, reflect the decision to be His. Further, it's each believer's responsibility to explore the possibilities of living for Christ (**v. 17**).

Proverbs 15:22 says, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." By our own knowledge we cannot always make the right decisions. We need to step away from our limited perspective to listen to the advice of experienced Christians to help guide us.

In **Romans 12:3-8**, Paul discussed how believers can minister through the unity and diversity of the Christian community. He used the illustration of the Body of Christ to show that just as each body part has a different, yet important, role, so also each believer's part in the Body of Christ is equal in value, having come from the same Spirit. No believer should think that he or she has nothing to contribute or that there are only a few select jobs from which Christians can choose. Every gift from God can be used in His service. These gifts from God may help us decide what to do with our futures or may be used in ministry to glorify Him. What is important is that every believer realizes that God has given them certain abilities to use in their lifetime.

LIFE NEED

"And what do *you* want to be when you grow up?" Now that your students are in junior high and high school and approaching some major decisions, this childhood question takes on sudden importance for them. In any given day, they can change their minds from one career to another and be very serious and passionate about each one! This seeming fickleness is a positive thing. Older teens especially are at a point in their lives where they should be embracing the countless possibilities and opportunities available to them.

However, some of your students may experience undue pressure from parents or teachers to become something "big." Others may be discouraged, having been told they aren't good enough to do what they want.

Use this lesson to let your students know that they can glorify and serve God in many different careers. Help them see that once they have chosen God, they will have God's help in looking at what He has given them in the way of dreams, talents, and natural tendencies. Further, God wants them to *choose* what they would like to do! They need just to be faithful to God and their knowledge of who He is and who they are in relation to Him.

RESOURCES

- Paper; pencils or drawing utensils (see sidebar in LIFE section for complete list)
- Bibles
- Chalk/marker board, chalk/markers
- Objects or clothing associated with different careers.
- Copies of *The Me You See* handout, pencils
- "Gifts You Might Have" sidebar (optional)

PREPARING THE TEACHER

Think about when you were a teen:

- ☞ What career path did you want to pursue? Why?
- ☞ What role, if any, did God have in helping you pick your path?
- ☞ What adults helped you think through the issues surrounding what you wanted to do with your life?

Examine your life now:

- ☞ Are you still pursuing the same career you chose as a senior high?
- ☞ If you are, what are the things that have helped you to stay in your chosen occupation?
- ☞ If not, what types of things have you learned from changing occupations?
- ☞ Do you think God is pleased with your choice of occupation and your work ethic?

Think about your students:

- ☞ What are some of the obstacles that could keep them from giving their vocations to God?
- ☞ What can you share with your students to help them look to God when deciding on a career?
- ☞ How can you encourage your students to use the gifts and abilities they have been given to make a difference in the world through their occupations?

There are few topics more important than that of vocation. Our careers not only provide us with the financial support we need but often bring fulfillment to our lives. When we enjoy our jobs and feel as if we are making a difference, then we tend to give more of ourselves to our jobs.

Fifty years ago, a person could go into a career and plan to spend his or her life in it. That is no longer the case. Now, the average person will change careers three times in a lifetime. Perhaps you have experienced this already or know of someone who has.

Due to a combination of factors (including generational differences, workplace upheaval, and our increasingly technologically driven society), older generations often believe that today's students

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.

—Corrie ten Boom

are not interested in hard work. We see them coming back home to live after college, often while pursuing further ed-

ucation. But we have to realize that pursuing a career today is vastly different from the way it was in the last century. Many of the students in your class *do* have a desire to prepare themselves to be the best that they can be.

You have the terrific opportunity in this lesson to move beyond stereotyping your students and to help them as they make choices that will affect what they do with their lives. See them, not as aimless teenagers, but as children of God, full of hope and potential. Think about what He's done in your life. Know that He can accomplish the same in the lives of your students. And don't ever forget that God has given them a purpose and a reason for living—just as He has you.

As you teach this lesson, rejoice in the ways God has led you in seeking out your vocation.

Determine today

that you will be the mature Christian your teens need as they look toward their future with God.

The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time.

—Abraham Lincoln

TEACHING THE LESSON

LIFE

Student Goal: Consider what their career will be 10 years from now.

When I Grow Up ⌚15

Before class, collect several items or pieces of clothing generally associated with different careers. Some ideas to get you started are listed in the sidebar. Bring these items to class and lay them in a pile in one area in your room. As the students come in, invite them to look through the stack and to begin thinking about which items represent for them their life 10 years from today.

Then have students, one by one, quickly pull out items and share with the class briefly their plans or dreams for the future. Keep in mind that some of your students may not find an item that pertains to them. Encourage those students to draw a picture of what they think they'll look like in 10 years and share it with the class (have paper and drawing utensils available).

When each student has had an opportunity to share, ask these questions:

- **How often do you think about what you're going to do with your life?**
- **How important is it to you to know what lies ahead?**
- **How many of you hope to be married? Be parents? Own a home? Have a car?**
- **How do you make those dreams realities? What steps do you think a person needs to take at your age right now to realize a future that includes his or her dreams?**
- **What role does God play in your future dreams?**

Then say: **Obviously, the future doesn't happen overnight. There are things we all have to learn, ways we need to grow, and life decisions we need to make. We get to the future one day at a time. And what we do each day influences the future's outcome—who we will be and what we will be doing. God has something to say about the way we are preparing now for our futures.**

For use with the When I Grow Up activity:

- Box of Band-Aids—
medical field
- Mouse pad—
computer field
- Christian magazine—
Christian journalism
- Newspaper—
secular journalism
- Bible—formal ministry
- Flannel shirt—
outdoor work
- Blazer or suit jacket—
office work
- Sports equipment—
professional sports
- Blueprints—engineer
- Army fatigues—
military service
- Calculator—accounting
- Apple/chalk—teacher
- Hats of all sorts
- Children's book/toy—
homemaker

NOTES

TRUTH

Student Goals: Discover what God's Word says about planning for the future; identify gifts God has given each of us.

Career Counseling ⌚15

Ask a student to serve as recorder, and ask students to brainstorm a list of all the jobs or roles they think a person serving God can have. Let them list as many job titles as possible. Then ask, **In what ways do you think a Christian in each of these jobs could honor God?** Or, more pointedly, ask them how they've seen someone in particular in these job areas honor God.

Give them time to think and discuss; then guide the discussion further by asking a student to read Colossians 3:17 to the class. Then ask the following questions:

- **Do you think there are jobs or careers or areas of ministry that are more important to God than others?**
- **If so, what would those jobs be?**

Ask a volunteer to read Romans 12:3-8, and then ask,

- **From what you see in this passage of Scripture, are there any gifts more important than the others?** (None)
- **What does that tell you about one's job or career choice?** (The Body does not have just one part that can function without the others. All the gifts are of the same importance yet different in function.)
- **Are there any careers, then, that are more important than others?**

Then say in your own words, **Let's brainstorm. Take a moment and look at our previous job list. What talents or gifts do you think are necessary or appropriate to do those jobs?** (Allow students to respond.) Have your recorder list these next to the job title. After students have finished, transition to the VISION phase of the lesson with this statement: **Sometimes we don't pursue certain jobs because we don't feel qualified for them. However, often it's easier to see our gifts when others point them out. Let's help each other out by identifying possible careers we think our fellow students could have as a result of their gifts.**

VISION

Student Goal: Use advice from Scripture and mature Christians to evaluate plans for the future.

NOTES

I See God in You 🕒10

Distribute copies of *The Me You See* handout, which is printed at the end of this lesson. Instruct class members to write their names on the handouts and pass it to the person on their left. Then each person is to look at the name at the top of the handout, list one job/career he or she thinks that person could have, and then pass it to the left again. Keep going until each person has his or her own handout. Then have each person read one job/career listed on the handout that he or she never considered before. (Remind your students to take this seriously. Some of your students will really need this encouragement, and teasing could really be hurtful at this point.)

After everyone who wants to has shared, ask:

- **Were you surprised at what was listed on your paper? Why or why not?**
- **Do you believe what others have seen in you?** (They can know that whether they feel as if they have a particular gift or not, if someone sees it in them, there must be a reason. So there's at least the potential for that gift in them.)

Say, **Now, add any others you think are possibilities. Then turn over your handout, and list the top three jobs or careers in which you feel you might do well.**

As they do this, say, **We know now that everyone has gifts and that those gifts are from God. Further, we know that God wants us to choose jobs that allow us to use our gifts to honor Him. And further, we've learned that sometimes others can see those gifts more easily than we can.**

Monkey See, Monkey Do 🕒5

Have a student read Proverbs 15:22. Then say, **The benefit of the advice of other, more mature Christians is a big help in reaching a future that honors God. Think of at least two mature Christians you could trust to advise or mentor you. They may or may not have the same spiritual gift(s) you do. Write their names down by your list of career options.** Ask the students to get to know those persons better and possibly approach them for advice/mentoring. Remind your students to think of people at different age levels. Someone their own age may be able to offer advice or accountability. Someone of a much older generation may have a lot of experience to draw from.

Close in prayer, thanking God for His ultimate gift in giving Christ to die for our sins and for giving us each different gifts. Ask God to help your senior highers in the days to come to look to Him as they sort through their dreams and hopes for the future.

CREATIVE OPTIONS

Group Singing

If your students enjoy singing, any of the following choruses would fit nicely with this lesson's focus on allowing God to help in planning their future: "My Turn Now," "Shine Out the Light," "Shine, Jesus, Shine," and "I Give All to You," all from *All the Best Songs for Youth* chorus book (Lillenas Publishing Company, MB-748). Order from www.barefootministries.com.

Guest Speaker

Consider, for your next session, asking several adults who the students named in the Monkey See, Monkey Do VISION activity to serve on a panel to discuss with students their life journey and their decision to become who they are or to do what they are doing today.

Service Project

In advance of this lesson, prepare a list of community organizations that use student volunteers. Make this list available to students at the end of this lesson, and encourage them to match their gifts to a community service. Or decide as a group to volunteer together as a team of people with many gifts.

Tasty Twist

As a replacement activity for the When I Grow Up LIFE activity, use fortune cookies to start a discussion on how to tell what your future is going to be like.

Who's Who

For an opening LIFE activity, make an audio recording of several people who the students would know. While hiding the identity and occupation of these people, have them explain what they do in a day's work and how they use their occupation to glorify God. After playing each interview, have students guess who it was and what he or she does.

Pick a Future

As a replacement activity for the When I Grow Up LIFE activity, use this. Before coming to class, make a list of careers (enough for everyone in your class). Cut them into strips of paper and put them in a hat or bowl. As students come into class, have them select one of the strips of paper, instructing them to not share them with others. After everyone has arrived, divide the class into groups of three to five. Explain to them that the object of the activity is to try to guess everyone else's career in a "20 questions" format. Each student will take a turn being interrogated. The other students are allowed to ask them yes or no questions. If a student guesses the career incorrectly, he or she is not allowed to direct any more questions or guesses to the student being questioned. If no one has guessed the correct answer after 20 questions, the student being interrogated wins that round. (Remind them that they have to reply honestly and to the best of their ability.) The student in each group that guesses the most correct answers wins.

After the groups are finished, ask the questions located in the LIFE section.