

What were you like when you were 12 years old?

This will be easier for some of you to think about, since it wasn't that long ago.

I was finishing 6th grade and starting Junior High School.

I had my first kiss at Camp Kirchenwald.

And there were things I spent a lot of time doing – gymnastics, playing guitar, reading and singing.

Share some of your 12-year old story with someone near you. (If you are not yet 12, listen to the stories around you)

One of the things most 12-year-olds are doing is beginning the journey to independence.

They are learning that their parents don't have all the answers and that there are other points of view to consider.

Friends and school take on a bigger role. The world is expanding.

This story about Jesus connects with our own experience in some ways, doesn't it?

We understand his separation from his parents.

We understand his increasing knowledge.

There are 3 important things this story wants us to pay attention to:

1. Jesus is both fully human and fully God.
 - a. He knows his identity is Son of God
 - b. He knows he is also son of Mary and Joseph.
2. Jesus has wisdom that is beyond simple knowledge – wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit within him.
3. Jesus grasps his purpose as doing the will of his Father – that is, to save God’s people from destruction.

It is this last point that we focus on today.

It is good to know who we are

– but even more important to know *why* we are who we are

– **to know God’s purpose for our lives**

and to align our actions to that purpose.

In the temple, Jesus was aligning his life with his purpose as God’s anointed Savior.

He chose to go to his Father’s house – that is, the Temple in Jerusalem.

He was demonstrating to the learned rabbis that God’s Word was something he grasped beyond mere knowledge.

They were amazed at him because it seemed to them that he had an inside track on what God was up to in human history.

They would remember this day about 20 years later, when he read from the Isaiah scroll and said “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

And what did God’s Word say?

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Everything Jesus did in his public ministry was aligned with this purpose from God for his life.

Jesus is God's Messiah – the Christ – the one sent from heaven to a virgin's womb to redeem us from the clutches of sin and death.

And at age 12, he was beginning to find his way into that purpose, that identity.

This story also reminds us that Jesus is fully human – a boy – a child who is expected to be running with aunts and uncles and playing with cousins.

A child like us.

We are not anointed to save the world

– but God has given each of us an identity and purpose in life.

By our baptism, we have been anointed children of God and given the Holy Spirit within us.

That is God's doing. God has claimed us for his realm instead of abandoning us to the realm of death.

We have been anointed as those whom Jesus has redeemed by his death and resurrection

and to whom he has given the Holy Spirit.

And therefore, God's purpose for our lives is to expand his realm of life and light.

Each of us has gifts from God to fulfill God's purpose.

Some apostles, some teachers, evangelists, healers, prophets, pastors, administrators, ...

The question is – how are we aligning our lives to God's purpose?

- How do the choices we make – whether we are 12 or 112 – match up with what God is doing?
- Do our actions foster life or death?
- Are we using the gifts God has given us in ways that reflect his will?

This is the time of year when people make New Year's resolutions.

Thinking about God's purpose and aligning our lives with God is a good way to frame those resolutions.

When we do, we know we are not pursuing those actions on our strength alone, but with the full power of God.

Take a moment to consider one action you might take this week to align your life with God's purpose. Write it down.

Tell it to the person next to you.

Now pray for each other – asking God for strength to carry it out.

Covenant to pray for each other throughout the week.

Put your action statement in a place at home where you will see it daily.

Know that as you align your life with God's purpose, like Jesus, you will increase in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and others. And God will treasure in his heart all that you are doing to expand his realm of life and light in our world.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjuSdwcX4Dg>