Fertile Question: *Is my existence part of a bigger plan?*

Core Content Area 2: *Why are we here?*

**TOPIC 2.1: Being the best you can be**

- Lesson 2.1.1 Living a life of purpose
  - Lesson 2.1.2 Buddhism and the wheel of life
  - Lesson 2.1.3 Judaism and living a good life

**TOPIC 2.2: The getting of wisdom**

- Lesson 2.2.1 What the philosophers say
  - Lesson 2.2.2 Discerning purpose
  - Lesson 2.2.3 Learning by example

**TOPIC 2.3: Leaving a legacy**

- Lesson 2.3.1 Living sustainably
  - Lesson 2.3.2 Leaving the world a better place

Depthing Understanding: A case study in purpose

Extending Knowledge: *I think therefore I am. Is that it?*
Fertile Question: *Is my existence part of a bigger plan?*

Core Content Area 2: Why are we here?

**TOPIC 2.1: Being the best you can be**

**Lesson 2.1.1 Living a life of purpose**

In this lesson students will explore a Christian view of what it means to live a life of purpose and being the best you can be.

**Teachers: Before You Start!**

1. Read the Teacher Background about purpose and the Christian search for meaning.
2. Consider setting up a TodaysMeet page for collaboration.

**STUDENTS**

**For students to explore a Christian view of what it means to live a life of purpose, select from the following activities:**

1. Explore a Christian view of a purposeful life.
   a. Share ideas about purpose and a purposeful life.
      i. View the brief clip about revelation from the Monty Python film *The Holy Grail* (1min 9sec) and answer the following questions. How is God portrayed in the clip? The film declares the quest for the Grail to be Arthur’s purpose, Does this suggest that before that point Arthur was living a life without purpose?
      ii. Create a Wordle with as many words, phrases, and sentences as you can that describe or give meaning for the word ‘purpose’. Share with the class.
      iii. Recall significant times in your life so far when you have felt called or driven with a clear purpose and intention to do a particular thing. Compare how you felt in those times with times when you have been directed to do something and you didn’t feel there was a clear purpose. How important is it therefore to identify the reasons or purpose for your actions? Discuss.
   b. Explore the Christian concept of living life to the full and being the best you can be.
      i. View the short film *The Butterfly Circus* (20min). Discuss the following with a partner: What do you think is the message of the film? How did a sense of purpose change the lives of the circus performers? What was it that had to change in order for Wil to begin to reach his full potential? Are there negative things that you believe about yourself that might be stopping you from reaching your full potential? What is the significance of the butterfly in the film?
      ii. Research the life of Nick Vujicic, the man who plays the role of Wil in the Butterfly Circus. Share one of his messages about potential, faith or purpose by creating a motivational poster.
      iii. Conclude this lesson with a short time of meditation or reflection on your own sense of purpose. Are you making decisions at the moment about school, relationships, work, sport, drinking alcohol etc? Or are you just letting things happen? What is one thing you could change today that could energise your life and might help you live your life with more purpose?
Fertile Question: *Is my existence part of a bigger plan?*

Core Content Area 2: *Why are we here?*

**TOPIC 2.1: Being the best you can be**

**Lesson 2.1.2  Buddhism and the Wheel of Life**

In this lesson students will explore the Buddhist beliefs about the purpose of life by creating a class sized Wheel of Life (Bhavacakra).

**Teachers: Before You Start!**

1. Read the teacher background on Buddhism and purpose.
2. Decide how the class will complete the class Bhavacakra. Perhaps use a large sheet of butcher’s paper and draw a large circle divided into the segments indicated in Useful Resources.

**For students to explore Buddhist beliefs about the purpose of life, select from the following activities:**

1. Create a class representation of the Wheel of Life.
   a. Familiarise yourself with the realms of the Buddhist universe.
      i. Read the following introduction:

      The great tragedy of existence, from a Buddhist point of view, is that it is both endless and subject to impermanence, suffering and uncertainty. These three are called the *tilakhana* or three signs of existence. Existence is endless because individuals are reincarnated over and over again, experiencing suffering throughout many lives. It is impermanent because no state, good or bad, lasts forever. Our mistaken belief that things can last is a chief cause of suffering. It is uncertain because when we examine our experience, no knower can be defined and no enduring essence of experience can be located. Only achieving liberation, or *nirvana*, can free a being from the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

      ii. Examine carefully the Bhavacakra or Buddhist Wheel of Life, noting carefully the various twenty-two parts described: the centre (roots of all evil); the inner rim composed of two parts, the dark path and the light path; the six symbolic and transitory worlds; and the outer rim of the twelve interdependent causes and their effects, all being held by the monster of impermanence (Yama).

      iii. Create a class Bhavacakra by dividing the class so that one or two people have responsibility for each of the twenty-two parts described. Each person then researches his or her part or parts making sure they are able to describe the meaning of their section of the wheel. Locate or create images that represent their understanding of that section. The *size of the wheel will need to be set beforehand perhaps by drawing a template onto a large piece of butcher’s paper or similar.*

      iv. Construct the Bhavacakra wheel beginning with the images for the centre. It doesn’t matter if they have been drawn or printed. Glue them onto the group circle. Explain why the image or images have been chosen. Continue with the inner rim of the dark and light paths, followed by the six realms or worlds etc.

      v. Reflect on the activity and the structure of the Buddhist Wheel of life. What does it suggest to you about a Buddhist perspective of the purpose of existence? Does it suggest some kind of plan for human existence? Share with a partner.
Fertile Question: Is my existence part of a bigger plan?

Core Content Area 2: Why are we here?

TOPIC 2.1: Being the best you can be

Lesson 2.1.3 Judaism and living a good life

In this lesson students will examine a Jewish perspective about the purpose of life.

Teachers: Before You Start!

1. Read the Teacher Background regarding Jewish beliefs about life’s purpose.
2. Consider organising a visit to the Brisbane Synagogue. Contact details here.

For students to investigate a Jewish perspective on the purpose of life, select from the following activities:

1. Explore Jewish teachings about leading a purposeful life.
   a. Explore one point of view about living a good life as a Jewish person from a Jewish boy band called the Maccabeats.
      i. Read through the lyrics in Useful Resources as you view attentively the song The Book of good life by the Maccabeats. Create a list of actions that the song illustrates to the viewer about a good life for an observant Jew. Compare your list with a partner.
      i. Read the brief description of Jewish beliefs outlined on the BBC religion website.
      ii. Copy and paste the text down to, but not including The Jewish View of God into a Wordle.
      iii. Choose one aspect of Jewish beliefs about living a holy life from the Wordle that you would like to explore further. Examples include: relationship, community, holiness, family, acts etc. If you hover over a word and right click the mouse you have the option of removing a word. It is helpful to remove the obvious words like Jews, Jew, Judaism and God to identify important concepts.
      iv. Access the website of the Brisbane Synagogue and the Brisbane Hebrew community.
      v. Read a Monthly Newsletter from the Rabbi. One example is from August 2012. Find examples, events or activities from the Newsletter that illustrate your chosen aspect.
      vi. Share findings with a partner. Discuss with a partner your opinion of the effectiveness of these activities as a way of identifying Jewish beliefs about living a life of purpose. Suggest alternative ideas. Share as a class, and if possible and agreeable, increase understanding by completing some alternative activities. One example if you have a Twitter account is to follow @AskARabbiBoston.
Fertile Question: *Is my existence part of a bigger plan?*

Core Content Area 2: *Why are we here?*

**TOPIC 2.2: The getting of wisdom**

**Lesson 2.2.1 What the philosophers say**

In this lesson students will explore what some philosophers have said about the ultimate purpose of life.

**Teachers: Before You Start!**

1. Review the resources referred to in this lesson. Please note that the Meme generator may not be suitable if students are easily distracted. See Useful Resources.

For students to explore what philosophy has contributed to understanding about the meaning of life, select from the following activities:

1. **Philosophy** is the study of general and fundamental life questions, such as those connected with reality, existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind and language. Explore the contribution that philosophy has made to understanding what the purpose of life for a human being is.
   
   a. Research philosophical arguments regarding the meaning and purpose of life for a human.
      
      i. Choose one of the following branches of philosophy to investigate: Nicomachean Ethics, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Classical Liberalism, Kantianism, Utilitarianism, Nihilism, Pragmatism, Existentialism, Absurdism, Logical positivism, Postmodernism, Mohism, Confucianism. Work either individually or with a partner to locate information regarding the main ideas about the meaning of life, one key philosopher who held or holds the ideas, one quote from the philosopher and the major criticism of the philosophy. One article to start with is here.
      
      ii. Create a Fakebook page for the philosopher. Upload an image, at least one friend and two comments that the philosopher might post about the meaning of life. Include one more post from a critic who dislikes the post.
      
      iii. Create a philosophy meme using the information you have found to pose a question to the philosopher about something you would like more information about. You will need to locate a digital image to upload. An example is given in Useful Resources.
   
   b. Explore answers to the question: What makes us happy?
      
      i. View philosopher Alain de Botton’s short film about what makes us happy: Epicurus on happiness - Philosophy: a guide to happiness. What are the three ingredients for a happy life according to Epicurus? What is the Epicurean explanation as to why many people are not happy?
      
      ii. Construct an advertisement to portray Epicurean thinking with regard to living a happy life. Use one of the products from BigHugeLabs. Share advertisements with the class and consider sharing with the wider school community.
Fertile Question: *Is my existence part of a bigger plan?*

Core Content Area 2: Why are we here?

**TOPIC 2.2: The getting of wisdom**

**Lesson 2.2.2 Discerning purpose**

In this lesson students will explore specific Christian teachings about living a life of purpose.

**Teachers: Before You Start!**

1. Teach students how to create and share a TodaysMeet page.

**For students to explore specific Christian teachings about living a life of purpose, complete the following activities:**

1. Explore scripture passages that teach Christians about the characteristics of a meaningful life.
   a. Create groups of eight and set up a TodaysMeet page for the group to collaborate on.
      i. Allocate one piece of scripture from the list below to read and reflect on. They can be accessed online through Bible Gateway. Post to the TodaysMeet page the Scripture reference and what you think the passage is suggesting to Christians about how they ought to live.

         Genesis 1:26, 28 Then God said "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea…God blessed them and God said to them "Be fruitful and multiply…”.

         Exodus 20:4-17 The Ten Commandments.

         John 10:10 I have come so that they may have life and have it abundantly.

         Matthew 5.3-11 The Beatitudes.

         Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven.

         Matthew 22:36 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind…You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

         Matthew 25:34-40 The Judgement of the Nations.


      ii. Reflect as a group about what you think is essential to living a purposeful life as a Christian and construct a Twitter type response (150 characters or less) to share with the rest of the class.
Fertile Question: Is my existence part of a bigger plan?

Core Content Area 2: Why are we here?

TOPIC 2.2: The getting of wisdom

Lesson 2.2.3 Learning by example

In this lesson students will explore what is best about being human.

Teachers: Before You Start!

1. Create a Stixy or similar collaboration wall. (Reminder: Stixy requires Firefox or Google Chrome to open)
2. Explore the lesson plans on the My Hero website for extra activities on this topic.

For students to explore other wisdom about the purpose of human existence and what is best about being human, complete the following activities:

1. Explore examples of the best aspects of humanity.
   a. Investigate the common values that heroes have.
      i. Choose three or four people from different life-categories on the My Hero website. Read their brief biographies and create a list of the positive human values that each person possesses. Save the lists as a word document that can be shared with the class. If possible upload to a class Stixy wall.
      ii. Read the contributions from all of the class members. Compare and contrast the lists as a class. What are the most common values mentioned? (A cut and paste into Wordle will help you determine this quickly) What other values are missing that represent the best aspects of being human? Is it possible to say which field makes the most important contribution to creating the best possible world?
      iii. Read and critique the following: “What we need is an international organization that identifies, spotlights and promotes heroes from around the world who personify values that strengthen the fabric of the global village in which we live.” Discuss the ideas presented in the statement clarifying unfamiliar words or concepts. What questions, positives or negatives come to mind? Complete a SWOT analysis of the existence of such an organization. Share with a partner and the class.
   b. Analyse other wisdom contributions to add to understanding about life purpose.
      i. Read the following statements about life purpose:
         The purpose of life is a life of purpose
         Robert Byrne
         As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.
         Carl Jung
         If you can’t find your purpose find your passion.
         Dalai Lama
         Our prime purpose in life is to help others. And if you can’t help them, at least don’t hurt them.
         Mainer Maria Rilke
         The purpose of life is to be defeated by greater and greater things.
         Karl Marx
         The writer must earn money in order to be able to live and write, but he must by no means live and write for the purpose of making money.
      ii. Create a list of phrases or statements from religion, philosophy and wisdom texts that resonate with you about what it means to live a happy life.
Fertile Question: *Is my existence part of a bigger plan?*

Core Content Area 2: Why are we here?

**TOPIC 2.3: Leaving a legacy**

**Lesson 2.3.1 Living sustainably**

In this lesson students will investigate how living sustainably might contribute to a better world.

**Teachers: Before You Start!**

1. Divide the class into six groups for this lesson so that each group reports on the responsibilities for sustainable patterns of living for one of the following: Individual, Class, School, Town, Country and World.

**For students to explore the concept of living sustainably, select from the following activities:**

1. The next few lessons allow students to explore the idea that it might be each generation’s purpose to leave a legacy to future generations for a better world.
   a. Investigate the concept of sustainable living and how it is connected to legacy and purpose.
      i. Form six groups. In your group, share understandings about the word *legacy*. If necessary check the dictionary to be sure the group understands the word.
      ii. Read the following from the Australian Curriculum: *Embedding Sustainability* as a cross curriculum priority will allow all young Australians to develop an appreciation of the need for more sustainable patterns of living, and to build the capacities for thinking and acting that are necessary to create a more sustainable future. Discuss the following in your group: Why would sustainability be a part of the Australian Curriculum? How might embedding sustainability as a cross curriculum priority in the Australian curriculum contribute to a legacy for future generations?
      iii. As a group, discuss what might be meant by the phrase *sustainable patterns of living* remembering that there are both human and natural aspects to sustainable living. Complete a Frayer concept chart for one of the six categories: Individual, Class, School, Town, Country or World. You should refer to the ten key themes of *Catholic Social Teaching* to help you with your task. Select one person to present your chart to the class.

\[\text{Frayer concept chart for Sustainable patterns of living}\]

   \begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
   \hline
   Definition & Characteristics \\
   \hline
   Examples & Non Examples \\
   \hline
   \end{tabular}

   iv. Discuss as a class how living sustainably might contribute to a purposeful life.
Fertile Question: *Is my existence part of a bigger plan?*

Core Content Area 2: *Why are we here?*

**TOPIC 2.3: Leaving a legacy**

**Lesson 2.3.2 Leaving the world a better place**

In this lesson students will explore creative and inspiring ways of leaving the world a better place.

**Teachers: Before You Start!**

1. View the short *movie clip* of Bruce Mau explaining the usefulness of entrepreneurism in education.

**For students to explore creative ways of leaving the world a better place, select from the following activities:**

1. Explore the power of the individual to influence and change the world.
   
   a. Explore a variety of people who have left the world a better place by spending their lives alleviating the suffering of others.
   
      i. View the movie clip about the life of [Mother Teresa](#) (5mins 30s) and answer the following questions: What do you understand from the film about the life purpose? How did the director describe the legacy of Mother Teresa? What actions are mentioned in the film that led to her increasing her influence on the world? How is the individual challenged by Mother Teresa’s words to participate in making the world a better place?
   
      ii. View the *movie clip* (4mins 20s) about the contribution of Australian doctor Fred Hollows to the lives of people who suffer blindness and answer the following questions: How would you describe the legacy of Fred Hollows? How can individuals contribute to this legacy?
   
      iii. View the *movie clip* of Bono inviting the viewer to participate in the legacy of making poverty history and answer the following questions: What was the moment that Bono described that impacted on his decision to work for this cause? How do you respond personally to his question: What does your generation want to be remembered for?
   
   b. Explore the power of design thinking as a way of making the world a better place.
   
      i. View the *movie clip* that explains how design thinking can help the individual to create a better future and use the ideas from the clip of expanding the conversation about climate change to complete the following task.
   
      ii. Form groups of four. One person create a *Type with me* page where everyone can share their ideas and share the page address with the group.

   Imagine a world in the future where a problem of significance to your community, state, country or the world has been solved. Some examples include: reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, refugees arriving in Australia safely, obesity in Australian children, homelessness in Brisbane, human impact on climate change halted, world peace, crime, etc. Create a list of as many questions as possible that you need answers to about how the solution came about. What changed?

   iii. Reflect on all of the questions that the group has asked. Imagine possibilities as answers for the questions and record your suggestions. Remember, solutions to these problems don’t yet exist, so let your imagination run wild. Share group solutions as a class.

   iv. Reflect on this task by discussing the value of intentionally living one’s life with a goal of leaving the world a better place.
Lesson 2.1.2

Back to Lesson

Lesson 2.2.1

**Fakebook** is an enjoyable online tool that can be used to generate Facebook style pages without accessing Facebook. The free version has advertisements for the creator of the app. Classnet tools as well as many examples of created pages to view but if you scroll below the ads you have full access to the tool.

**LOLcat generator** is a free online tool in the Big huge labs suite for generating memes such as the one below. Students simply upload an image that they already have stored or located online and apply the captions top and bottom. Useful for posing philosophical questions. Creative Commons is a good source for images. Be sure to follow copyright rules.

Example

Acknowledgment: Image by Jacob Boetter, January 17, 2009, via Flickr, Creative Commons Attribution
Lesson 2.1.3

*Book of Good Life* - Maccabeats

Woke up and realized yesterday
Think it’s a bummer end of the summer
Kinda nervous that we’re almost there
At the days of awe

Prayers in a language that I don’t know
Standing for hours and hours more
I wish that someone would please tell me e-e-e-e
What it is we’re praying for

Oh put me in the book of good life
I just wanna live the good life
This could really be a good life, good life

Say oh, we’ve got feelings that we should fight
Make sure that we’re choosing right
Gotta earn my own place in
The book of good life

Time for reflection on the past year
Time to figure out what we’re doing here
Replace the guilt with inspiration
And everything is clear

Life in the present, the here and now
Easier than regret and planning out
Living in the moment, lasts for a moment
Got my future to think about

When you’re sitting there in shul
Wishing it was over
You gotta take a beat
And let it all sink in

Oh put me in the book of good life
I just wanna live the good life
This could really be a good life, good life

Say oh, we’ve got feelings that we should fight
Make sure that we’re choosing right
Gotta earn my own place in
The book of good life

Oh yeah
Book of Good life
Ooh

Listen
Time for reflection on the past year
Time to figure out what we’re doing here
Replace the guilt with inspiration
And everything is clear

Life in the present seems more fun
Easier than regret, what’s done is done
Living in the moment, lasts for a moment
Shana Tova to everyone

Hopefuly
This year will bring us happiness and peace
Hopefuly
Sensitivity to others will increase
Hopefuly
We’ll open our eyes and think more consciously
Cuz Hopefuly
We’ll go from where we are to where we want to be

Lyrics By: Immanuel Shalev and David Block
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