



Spring 2005 *GOstudents.net* Bible Study

## A Life That Matters

### Materials:

- *GOstudents.net* Download Video: *Jonathan Pettigrew*
- Computer, monitor or video projector to display video
- One copy of *GOstudents.net* Group Activity for “A Life that Matters” for each student
- A chalkboard, whiteboard, overhead projector or large sheet of paper on which to write
- Optional: Printouts of the *GOstudents.net* article about Jonathan Pettigrew. You’ll find it in the People section of *GOstudents.net*. (Or click this link in your PDF document: <http://www.gostudents.net/site/pp.asp?c=ejINI5PNKpG&b=387843>)

### Video Intro:

The launching point for this study is the dramatic story of Jonathan Pettigrew, a campus missionary with Baptist Collegiate Ministry at the Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis campus. To kick things off, play the *GOstudents.net* Download Video called *Jonathan Pettigrew*. It’s 4 minutes, 52 seconds long, and it tells Jonathan’s positive story about how a tragic, near-fatal accident helped him discover God’s will for his life.

### Group Activity:

Hand out copies of the Group Activity to each student. It’s just a page for them to write down the main points from this study. Hopefully it will help to anchor these ideas in their minds. Asking them to write down the points will show them how important these truths are to you and should be to them.

### Why Your Life Matters

Jonathan’s story is definitely inspirational. It makes us feel kind of good. But we can learn a lot more from his experience than just to be careful on ledges when hiking in the mountains. Jonathan’s story can teach us a few things about how to choose a life that really matters.

Today, we want to emphasize four very important points. Make sure you write each of them down on your note page, along with any ideas that seem important to you.

#### 1. Life is a gift.

People who have close brushes with death often talk about realizing what an amazing and precious gift life really is. But is it just their lives that are special? Of course not; all of life is a gift from God.



King David wrote in Psalm 139 that God is involved in creating our lives right from the start. [Ask a student to read Psalm 139:13-16, reprinted here from the Holman Christian Standard Bible.]

For it was You who created my inward parts;  
You knit me together in my mother's womb.

I will praise You,  
because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made.  
Your works are wonderful,  
and I know [this] very well.

My bones were not hidden from You  
when I was made in secret,  
when I was formed in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw me when I was formless;  
all [my] days were written in Your book and planned  
before a single one of them began.



Life is no accident. God put us here and now on purpose. He sketched the blueprints for each of us before we showed up. He crafted us as an artist would form a great work. And He made each of us unique, a little different from all the other billions of humans who have lived or will live.

Life is a gift from God. Your life matters because it mattered enough to God to form you, and it matters to Him to keep you alive for now. Hopefully, we don't have to come close to dying to take life really seriously.

## **2. Life is hard and short.**

When he tells his story, Jonathan Pettigrew emphasizes his gratitude for being alive. But it's also true that he almost died. The result of his accident was much pain and a long, agonizing rehab so he could walk again. Yes, his life now is a miraculous gift from God. But everyone's life is hard in one way or another.

Because of sin in the world, there's lots and lots of suffering. For everybody and everything. Paul wrote that "we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. And not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—

we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:22-23, HCSB).

So on the one hand, life is a great gift worth celebrating. On the other hand, life on earth is much harder than it should be. Sin has corrupted everything, leading to pain and death. Paul warned his readers not to put their hope in anything this life has to offer; nothing can take away the “groaning” or emptiness that comes with being human.

Fortunately, life on this side of heaven is also very, very short. That’s something Jonathan learned loud and clear when he stared death in the face. James wrote, “You don’t even know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are a bit of smoke that appears for a little while, then vanishes” (James 4:14, HCSB).

That’s why it doesn’t make any sense to look to life on this side of heaven for purpose and meaning. Instead, Christians put their hope in the greatest gift of eternal life in heaven with God the Father.

But what should we do with now? Today? Use your difficult, short, wonderful life to live for something that matters. It matters how you live your life because it’s so short. And eternity is very, very long.

### **3. You have a purpose.**

So are Christians just meant to sit and twiddle those thumbs waiting for this short, tough, hopeful life to end so we can get on with the whole heaven thing? Not so much. For one, we’ve been given the gift of eternal life. Other people are still waiting to hear about it. A great way to spend our days is to spread that amazingly good news.

Again, Paul points out, “For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift” (Ephesians 2:8, HCSB). All those people who have the gift of life need to hear about the gift of eternal life in heaven with God, where there is no suffering or pain or crying or death. What better way to use our time on earth than to point people to that gift?

But you don’t have to stop there. Two verses later, Paul identified that we’re still here for a reason. We’ve got good work to do: “For we are His creation—created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them” (verse 10).

Remember that whole thing about God planning out your life before you were ever born? If you’re a believer in Jesus, He also prepared a mission for you during your time on earth. He



created good works for you to do so you could thank Him for that incredible gift of life.

#### **4. Do something worth doing.**

So how do you figure out what your mission is? Somehow, Jonathan's accident helped him see that God wanted him to work as a missionary on a college campus. You might not be so clear on your purpose yet. But that will come. The path is in front of you. To find out where it goes, you've got to start moving.



[Ask a student to read Hebrews 12:1-2.]

Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne.

You don't have to wait to get an e-mail from heaven spelling out what you should do with your short, wonderful, hard life. You already know how to start. Stop doing worthless things. You don't have time for them. Follow Jesus. He didn't sit down until He got to the end of His earthly race. Start doing what He's given you to do today, and before long you'll find yourself in the middle of the mission He has for your life.

#### **Conclusion:**

Close by asking your students a question. What choices would they make if they knew they had a terminal disease that could kill them at any moment? How would they live? What would be important and what wouldn't? Guess what? We all have that exact disease. None of us knows how much time we have on this side of heaven. God calls us to spend our short time here doing something worth doing.

Pray, asking God to give each of you a sense of urgency about your lives. Ask Him to give you a burden to stop doing worthless things, to tell others about the gift of eternal life and to keep moving forward on the path of following Jesus. Thank Him for the amazing gift of life He's given to each of you, both this life and the one to come.

Remind your students to check out *GOstudents.net* to read Jonathan Pettigrew's full story. They can meet him and other interesting people in the People section of the site.

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