



A Life of Purpose

Featuring Brandon Slay

Olympic gold medalist

When you're in the moment—at practice, in the gym, or on the mat during competition—that's not usually the time we as athletes find ourselves engaging in deep thought, self-evaluation, or contemplative reflection. In the moment, we're most likely focused on the task at hand—getting in shape, improving our skills, or winning the match.

But at some point, a difficult question is bound to come up:

“Why am I here?”

You might already know the answer to that question, but maybe you don't. And that question isn't limited to our athletic pursuits. In fact, it's a question that reaches into the core of who we are as human beings. It's a question that we are compelled to answer at various stages of our lives and amid the daily quest to keep our priorities in the right order.

While training for the Olympics, Brandon Slay was faced with a similar inquiry.

“What do you think your purpose is?” a local pastor in Colorado Springs, Colorado, asked him one morning.

“My purpose is to work out, lift weights, wrestle hard, go win a gold medal, retire from wrestling, get married, have some kids, work until I'm 60, retire, go fishing with my buddies, and then I'll go die,” Slay responded.

The pastor didn't argue with Slay but instead encouraged him to take some time to think about his answer. Thinking about it made him mad. That couldn't be his purpose. There had to be something greater than that.

“At the same time, God was stirring my heart,” Slay reflects. “Since then, I've come to understand that my purpose is to know the Savior and to make Him known. You can still wrestle. You can still get married and have kids. You can work until you retire. You can go fishing with your buddies. But all of those things are secondary to our higher calling.”

One of the most famous scriptures about the topic assures us that we all, in fact, do have a reason for being on this planet:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11/NLT)

But what specifically *is* that plan?

God uses our gifts and talents to impact the world around us. Therefore, our individual purposes will often look different from one another. But no matter what our individual purpose might be, it should always be tied to the greater purpose—a purpose that we as Christians all share.

“I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them. (Isaiah 43:7b/NLT)

Ultimately, our purpose for anything we do in life—competing, coaching, serving, teaching, working, building relationships, etc.—is to “know God, and to make Him known through our lives”. When we do that, we will find true fulfillment and, most importantly, open the door to sharing the life-changing message of God’s love with those around us.

Discussion Questions

1. How often do you think about the purpose behind your athletic career? Do you feel like you have a good understanding of that purpose? Explain.
2. What are some bigger questions about purpose that you think about on a regular basis? Which ones have you struggled to answer?
3. What do you think is your general purpose in life? What about your specific purpose as it relates to your God-given talents and abilities?
4. In your own words, how would you define the concept of being created for God’s glory? Is this concept something that you find easy or difficult to express on a daily basis?
5. What are some things that you can start doing today that will make Jesus known in your life?

Closing Prayer