

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Bible Study

What Is The Meaning Of Life?

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A member of our congregation asked if I'd do a study on; "What is the meaning of life?"

Wow! That's a broad question. It's not a narrow question like; What the Bible says about something specific. You could ask a hundred people, and get as many different answers. It's probably the biggest question a person can ask - and answering it may cause some to sweat.

"The secret to life is meaningless unless you discover it yourself." W. Somerset Maugham

Humans have pondered this as long as we've been around. Dreamers, thinkers, poets, behaviorists, social analysts, Pastors, preachers, Bible authorities have shared their perspectives. Is there really an answer to the question?

Is the meaning of life defined by the individual living that life? Is it the attainment of one's dreams? Or, is man really the "captain of his own soul" as Henley wrote in his poem, "Invictus" (which is Latin for unconquerable)?

**It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.**

Perhaps the meaning of life is determined by one's own fulfillment? There was a doctor in Virginia in the 1700s, who kept encountering the same mental issues. His practice was in an affluent area, and the wealthy wives of influential government and industrial leaders lived opulent lives of ease. They were waited on hand and foot, and had nothing to do all day but think about themselves. The doctor's office was constantly full of these depressed, unhappy, purposeless

women who sought relief from their doldrums. He dared not prescribe addictive drugs, and he was not equipped to deal with mental health issues.

After much stress over the matter, he opened a home for these deeply distressed women, who sat in rockers all day, being attended by nurses. The well-intended effort proved only to make their conditions all the worse....until one of the women took to knitting as a pastime.

She finished a simple shawl and gave it to her favorite nurse, who expressed deep appreciation. The woman felt a 'lift' in her mood, and began knitting another. Soon, several of the other women were knitting and sewing with purpose and delight. They donated their wares to a local orphanage.

After only a few months, each of these wealthy, purposeless 'mental patients' had become so involved in doing good for others that they started a charity organization. They all left the asylum and continued their passion of helping the less fortunate.

Yes, we are social creatures, and helping others can give our lives purpose, but had these women found the meaning of life;doing for others?

In his book; "This Life," by Yale philosopher Martin Hagglund, he writes; **the best religious and philosophical traditions all implicitly recognize that the highest good, the thing we're really after, is this life that we share together. And that means we have to think about meaning and commitment with this truth in mind; It is death that gives life its meaning.**

Death gives life meaning? Is that because we only have so much time in this life, so make the most of it? Where's the meaning?

Perhaps the meaning of life can be found in religion. But WHICH religion? Every religion in human history, except TWO is/has been a man-made affair – an effort designed by MAN to reach up to God.

Every religion, except two, requires 'good works' to appease the 'god' of that system. That means the men who created these religions created their own 'god,' as well as the system for reaching this 'god.' The men who created religions are all dead, and in their graves, except for TWO.

The only two living founders of religion that have been alive since creation, and are alive today, are Jesus and Satan. So, one can seek meaning through fake religions and cults, or atheism. Or, they can seek meaning through Biblical Christianity or Satanism. I'm going to assume that my reader has come to the place in which Christianity is the way to go in this category.

Jesus said in **Luke 17:33** **"Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it."** On the surface, that's counter-intuitive. If one is to live a meaningful life, doesn't he actually have to LIVE it? Perhaps, that's Jesus' point! Live it, but not to one's self, or to a false god.

First; What Is The Real Question?

The most important part of answering a question, even if it's a broad question, is to narrow it down to one point. In every resource I've consulted on "what is the meaning of life?" there has been the word "satisfaction."

I initially interpreted "satisfaction" as "pleased, happy, contented." I was mostly wrong. So, I looked it up!

Webster's Definition of satisfy:

1a: to carry out the terms of (something, such as a contract) : DISCHARGE. b: to meet a financial obligation.

2: to make reparation to (an injured party) : INDEMNIFY

3a: to make happy : PLEASE. b: to gratify to the full : APPEASE

4a: CONVINCED. b: to put an end to (doubt or uncertainty) : DISPEL

5a: to conform to (specifications) : be adequate to (an end in view) b: to make true by fulfilling a condition values that satisfy an equation. Satisfy a hypothesis

Only definition #3 met my first assumption. All the others point to completing, or fulfilling conditions, or meeting some requirement. These definitions fall within the context of the 'meaning of life question.' If my life is to have meaning, it must complete, or meet some specification or expectation. If my life is to have meaning, it must also provide some level of satisfaction to me.....why? If a life is not, somehow, satisfying it will drain me of my energy, and I will not pursue it to its fullest....and it won't satisfy God's, or my, terms.

So, the meaning of life can ONLY be found if that meaning is important to my creator, first, and then, myself. Satisfying both expectations will provide the greatest meaning.

Your, and my, life were begun on this earth with a set of expectations. God has expectations, and we have them. If they are not met, our lives will have been less meaningful. If they are met, we will have led meaningful lives.

So, let's put our answer to the question, first, in this way: The meaning of life is to fulfill, complete, and meet a set of requirements – first, God's then mine, for the PURPOSE of my life.

(And, let me assure you from personal experience, as well as through others; when you discover God's purpose for your life, it will be the most personally fulfilling pursuit you could possibly have! What more perfect purpose can there be than what comes from the one who created you?)

The meaning of life is found in fulfilling the purpose of my life.

What About My Purpose?

To the godless, their purpose is whatever they determine it to be, or their fake god tells them it is. It may be to live one's life so purely that he is reincarnated into a higher life, or it may be to achieve as much enjoyment, wealth, status, etc., as one possibly can. This approach is entirely contained to the confines of the creation and the created. It is 100% earth-bound and temporal.

“Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.” The Dalai Lama

It is never wrong to do right....unless those good works inoculate you from the truth of Jesus. Apart from Christ, 'good works' are, quite literally, running from death, rather than running toward life!

These earth-bound values can be lofty: building hospitals, running charities, adopting pets, and on it goes. The problem with them is that the individual defines the sum total of his/her satisfaction level required to live a 'meaningful' life. The meaning of life, therefore, is whatever meets the design of the one in

the driver's seat. And, if the created man is the one driving, he sets the destination, the route and the pace for getting there.

Caesar Milan, the "Dog Whisperer," teaches that, an unstable dog is unstable it's because its OWNER is unstable. The dog responds to the energy of the head of the pack. If the pack leader is weak, the dog must step into the very unnatural role as head of the family (pack). So, when the doorbell rings, or a new person enters the house, or another animal shows up, the dog acts aggressively, or runs to hide, or barks non-stop. It has no choice but to react strongly because the OWNER is unstable.

(This, I personally believe, is the condition of the human living without Jesus! They are the masters of their own lives and their master is extremely unstable. Their instability is a result of not living their life according to God's purpose.)

So, let's cut to the chase: "What is the meaning of life for a Christian?" A Christian acknowledges their creator, first. So, answering our question should be easier.

Who's Image Is On You?

Answering the meaning of life question starts with looking in the mirror; who's image do you see? Humans do not resemble any other of God's creatures - no, not even apes. Nor are we similar to any other creatures at a genetic or cellular level. We cannot procreate, exchange blood or completely communicate with any other creature. God has created humans as unique images of Himself. Intrinsic in our make up is the God-shaped void that must be filled (purpose).

That void can only be filled (satisfied) by Jesus Christ. If that void remains, it really is entirely up to you, yourself, alone, to answer our topic question. Fill that void with Jesus (John 3: 16) and you are ready to proceed.

So, let's attack this question in four parts. Understand that, each of the following individual parts must result in a TRUTH. Then, all FOUR parts must also combine into one TRUTH. There can be no holes in this boat. If any of the four parts is untrue, the boat will sink. If the four truths cannot combine to make a truth, it will sink. Ready?

What Is The Meaning Of MY Life?

Anthropologists study the fact that all civilizations have/had religion. Most societies benefit from it in similar ways. However, they don't give much more than lip service to the fact that man's effort to reach god comes from a sincere search for "MEANING." Humans have always searched for answers to these questions;

1. **What is my origin?** (Where did I come from?)
2. **What is my purpose?** (What is the meaning of life? Why am I here?)
3. **What is my morality?** (How am I to live?)
4. **What is my destiny?** (What is beyond this life? Is there more for me than this?)

Whether sitting on a hilltop overlooking one's flock of sheep 5,000 year ago, or taking the elevator to a penthouse office in the city, these questions are ubiquitous to the human mind. Every human ponders them in some way. And, she/he most often looks to a deity for answers: origin, purpose, morality and destiny.

What is my origin?

God – the everlasting creator from before time and throughout eternity, created you:

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Genesis 1: 26-27

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Genesis 2: 7

Out of love, God created man and woman. He created us in His image and put us on this earth for a purpose. Man was not first a tadpole, then a fish, then a lizard,

then a monkey. Mankind was created in his/her entirety, and in this form, by God. God knew you and loved you before he formed you:

“But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles,” Galatians 1: 15-16a

God gave humans His image, His likeness, His characteristics – uniquely above all else that he had created. When you look in the mirror, ask; “Who’s image is on me?” It is God’s! When you look at a child, ask; “Why do I love so much?” It is because God wants you to love as He loves.

What Is My Purpose?

God did not create you out of chaos, or for no specific reason. When He created the first man, Adam, He gave him a job to do;

“Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” Genesis 2: 15

God has a purpose for your life, as well;

“For those whom He foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Romans 8:29

God created us to love us, and so that we may love Him. As with any parent, God desires to show love to his children, and he desires that His children love Him in return...freely; not out of obligation, under duress, or for a reward. God knew you before He formed you, and he set you in a place that requires your specific qualities to fill His purpose for you and others.

“...the firstborn of many brothers.” You were created for ...and your purpose is ... to spread the Gospel of Christ.

“Only fear the Lord (respect him) and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.” 1 Samuel 12:24

“I glorified you (God) on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.” John 17: 4

“What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,” Psalm 8: 4-6

To understand your purpose, your life’s meaning, you must know that sharing Christ with others is on the list. By walking with Jesus daily, your full purpose will be revealed.

What is Morality?

Webster’s defines **“Moral”**: of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior: conforming to a standard of right behavior.

First, God is supreme above all creation; he is holy, flawless, and pure. God has a standard, and does not change...ever:

“For I am the Lord, I do not change” Malachi 3:6

God’s moral standard flows from His unchanging nature. Because God’s nature is perfect and holy, He cannot sin, so His standard is objective. It is impossible for God to contradict Himself or act inconsistently with His own nature. So, when God gives a command, or states a moral absolute, it flows from His own moral perfection. For example, it is against God’s character to lie, murder, etc., and so he cannot. Therefore, God has set those standards for us.

“if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.” 2 Timothy 2:13

“Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.” Hebrews 6: 17-18

So, the morality set in God’s word, the Bible is **His** perfect standard, not man’s. We are to love Him enough to strive to live according to it. Not that we EARN His love, but that He already loves us and we desire to return that love.

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples made by human hands. Nor is He served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth;....” Acts 17:24-26a

See the difference? The living God of the universe created humans in order to love them. He also provides a system for humans to be accepted by, and in relationship with, God. NONE of this is the work of man!! Man cannot make a flower or a fish. Nor can man resolve his own sin. **No good works on man’s part can erase sin or please God.** Only God, himself, can provide the way of salvation for man.

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world...For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2: 1-2a & 8-9

In contrast to man-made religions, Christianity is the full measure of God’s love which created you, God’s love which justifies you, and God’s love which propels you into eternity.

“He (God) reached down from heaven and rescued me; He drew me out of deep waters.

He rescued me from my powerful enemies, from those who hated me and were too strong for me.

They attacked me at a moment when I was in distress, but the LORD supported me.

He led me to a place of safety; He rescued me because He delights in me.”

Psalm 18: 16-19

What Is My Destiny?

Once I reach the end of my days, is there anything afterward? What is there on the other side of what I can perceive? Every human in history has had to deal with this. Where shall we turn for the answer? Shall we go to a religion that is

man-made – a perishable god made by perishable hands? Or, shall we look to that which is everlasting?

“Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made.” Isaiah 2: 8

Perhaps you’d rather choose the God who created all of life. You might look to the God who created you, and loved you before you drew breath. Perhaps you’ll look to the God who has performed miracle after miracle for the purpose of demonstrating that He, alone is the living God of all creation. Perhaps you’d look to God’s son, Jesus, who fulfilled over 350 prophecies, and who also performed many miracles to prove who he is.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” 2 Corinthians 5:1

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.” Philippians 3:20-21

“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” John 10:28

What Shall I Do With This?

1. Our origin is of God.
2. Our purpose is to live for God.
3. Our morality (the way we should live) comes from God.
4. Our destiny is to ultimately be present with God.

What is the meaning of life? An unfulfilled, unsatisfied, incomplete life is one that fails to acknowledge, or satisfy any of those four components. A life full of purpose and meaning is one that satisfies each of those four components.

Let us ask ourselves if we are pursuing each of these four aspects of this life.

- Are we running away from death, or pursuing life in Christ?
- Are we praying harder to keep ourselves OUT of heaven than we are praying for those who may never see heaven?
- Has this earth, and all its trappings, become our focus, or have we turned from the temporal toward the eternal?
- Do we live according to our own understanding, or do we immerse ourselves in God's Word so we might learn the mind of Jesus?

What is the meaning of YOUR LIFE? Start by looking in the mirror and asking; "Who's image is on me?"

If you come to this point, and feel you need additional wisdom, guidance, or support, please contact your Pastor, or a mature Christian who can assist you. God Bless you!