

WHAT ON EARTH AM I HERE FOR?

Week 1

Today we're going to look at life's three greatest questions:

- 1) The question of existence - why am I alive?
- 2) The question of significance - does my life matter? and
- 3) The question of intention - what is my purpose?

1) The question of existence – why am I alive?

It's not exactly a new question. It was asked thousands of years ago. In fact, Jeremiah asked it, [Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame? Jeremiah 20:18](#). Now there have probably been times in our lives when we felt that way, too. Was I born just to have a bunch of problems? Was I put on this planet just to have heartache, grief and stress? Arthur Ashley Brilliant (English author and cartoonist) says *"My life is a superb cast, but I can't figure out the plot."* Carl Jung, the famous psychiatrist said, *"I don't know the meaning, the purpose of life, but it looks as if something were meant by it."* These are tragic statements, because life without purpose isn't a life worth living. If you take God out of the equation, you don't really have very many alternatives.

You can try the Mystical approach - the mystical approach says "look within and find your purpose within." You know if that really worked, all of us would know our purpose. Then you can try the Philosophical approach: the survivalist says, "The purpose of life is just to stay alive," in other words, live as long as you can; the Naturalist says, "The purpose of life is just to perpetuate itself," in other words, you're just here for biological reasons; the Hedonist writes, "The purpose of life is pleasure - have fun, party-hardy;" and the Materialist says, "Life is all about the acquisition of things," our life is measured by the things we own. And so, these are not really satisfying answers.

Or you can try the Self-Help approach. You can go into any bookstore and find hundreds of books, that talk about discovering your life purpose. They all basically say the same thing; "You've got to create your own purpose in life." And they all give the same basic approach - discover your dreams, go after your goals, have some ambitions, dream big dreams, aim high, believe you can achieve, have faith, figure out what you're good at, never give up, involve other people. Now those are all good advice and they will, if you do those things, make you a success in life. But being a success and knowing your purpose in life are not the same thing. You can be a raving success in life and still never know, "What on earth am I here for?" The purpose of our life is far greater than our own personal fulfillment. It's far greater than our own happiness. Even our own peace of mind. We were made by God and we were made for God and we were put here for His purposes. And until we understand that, life isn't going to make sense.

Why does God want us here? Why are we alive? Why are we on this planet? Is there a reason? The Bible says in [Proverbs 16:4](#), [The LORD works out everything for his own ends](#). It's for His purpose. So what is God's motive? In [Ephesians 1:4](#) we read, [For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight](#). God says He made us, to love us. We were created to be loved by God. God is love and God wanted to create something to love and so He created us. He didn't need us. He wasn't lonely. But He made us in order to love us. What on earth am I here for – [to be loved by God](#).

2) The question of significance – does my life matter?

Isaiah asked this question in [Isaiah 49:4a](#). He said, [I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing](#). We were made for meaning, and if we don't have a meaning and purpose in our life and we don't know why God put us on this planet, life doesn't make sense.

During World War II, there were prisoners in a Nazi concentration camp in Hungary, that were processing human sewage in a factory. The allies came along, bombed that factory and blew it apart. So the prisoners had nothing to do. The Nazi soldiers had the prisoners take all the rubble of that factory and move it to another field. The next day, they had them take that same rubble and move it back in reverse. This went on day after day until the prisoners had no meaning, no purpose. Then something strange began to happen. The prisoners began to go crazy. They began to lose their will to live because there was no meaning, no purpose in their work. They were just moving bricks back and forth, back and forth. Many of them began to throw themselves in front of the guards trying to get shot. In essence, trying to commit suicide. Because we were made for meaning.

We're going to go through life living at one of three levels: The first and lowest level is the 'Survival level.' The 'Survival level' is where most people live today. They are just barely getting by. They're just existing. They are controlled by their circumstances. They put in their time and live for the weekend. They're just in survival mode.

A step up from the 'Survival level,' a better way to live, is the 'Success level.' In all honesty, this is where most of us are. By the world's standards, we've got it made. We've got a comfortable living compared to the rest of the world. We're extremely wealthy, compared to the rest of the world. We have possessions, we have freedom, we have good health and we may have prestige and we may be quite successful. But today there are a lot of books coming out that say things like, "If I'm so successful, how come I don't feel fulfilled?" The reason is, it takes more than success and it takes more than status to satisfy. We need to go to the third level of living, the 'Significance level.' How do we live at the 'Significance level?' Well, we get there through three things: knowing the meaning of life; knowing how much we matter to God; and knowing God's purposes for our life and that we're living them out.

If we want to know how much we matter to God, look at [Isaiah 44:2](#), [This is what the LORD says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb](#). God was caring for us even in His mind, as He thought us up. [Psalm 139:16](#) says, [Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be](#). That's how much we matter to God. He paid so much attention to our life that every detail was recorded in His book, before we even took a breath. And He sees everything in our life, the good, the bad and everything in-between. We do matter to Him.

One of the biggest ways we can waste our life is thinking all there is, is here and now. However, this life is not all there is, in fact we're going to spend far more time on that side of death, than we do on this side. The purposes we're going to talk about in the next 40 days are not just for the rest of our life on earth, they're for eternity, because God's purposes are eternal. [Psalm 33:11](#) says, [But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations](#). God says, "I have plans and purposes for your life, but they don't end at death" - [you are made to last forever](#).

3) The question of intention – what is my purpose?

So then comes the third question, the "Question of Intention - what is my purpose?" What on earth am I here for? And that's what we're going to spend 40 days looking at. In [Psalm 89:47](#) David asked the question, [Remember how fleeting is my life. For what futility you have created all men!](#) Who is David talking to when he says that, himself? No, he's talking to God. Probably the greatest, atheist philosopher of the last century, Bertrand Russell, a great Englishman said, *"Unless you assume the existence of God, the question of life's meaning and purpose is irrelevant."* If there is no God, if we're just a freak chance of nature - then guess what? - our life doesn't matter. If somebody wants to take it, they could, because there's no real reason, meaning or purpose. But, there is a God., and God made us for a reason, and He made us for a purpose.

The only way we're going to know our purpose is first looking to Him - it's not by listening to the philosophers, because even the best ones are just guessing. It's not looking within, because you're not going to find it there. It's not looking within self-help books, because they're just saying create a purpose. We've got to talk to the Creator and look in the owner's manual (the Bible). It's the only way we will ever know our purpose in life.

[Genesis 1:1](#), the first verse in the Bible...[In the beginning God created](#). If those words hadn't been there, we wouldn't be discussing the meaning of life. We wouldn't be discussing our purpose in life. [Colossians 1:16](#), [For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him](#). It all starts with God, it continues with God, it ends with God. [Proverbs 9:10](#) says, [The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.](#) If we want to understand the meaning of life, if we want to understand our purpose of life, we can find them [by getting to know God](#). The more we get to know God, the more we're going to understand the ways and the wisdom of God and the more we're going to understand the meaning and purpose of life. And the more we're going to understand everything else because the Bible says, knowing God results in every other kind of understanding.

Why take 40 Days over all of this?

Understanding God's purposes for our lives takes time. It's not just give it to me quick, and it's over. That's why we're going to take 40 days to look at God's purposes for us. The Bible is very clear that God considers 40 days to be a spiritually significant time period. In fact, in the Bible, any time God wanted to prepare people for His purposes, He took 40 days. For instance:

- Noah's life was transformed by 40 days of rain;
- Moses' life was transformed by 40 days on Mount Sinai;
- The spies were transformed by 40 days in the Promise Land;
- David was transformed by Goliath's 40-day challenge;
- The city of Nineveh was transformed in 40 days;
- Jesus was empowered for ministry by spending 40 days in the desert; and
- The disciples were transformed by 40 days with Jesus after the resurrection.

I pray that the next 40 days are going to transform each of our lives.