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1. *Knowing God*

The Meaning and Joy of Life

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

John 17:3

GOD’S PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE

Who am I?

Why am I here?

Does it matter to anyone that I am alive?

What happens to me when I die?

Most of us have asked ourselves these questions from time to time. It is part of the process that people go through to find some purpose in life. The world has well over six and a half billion (6,500,000,000) people, each one going through the daily activities of life. It is easy for an individual to feel lost in this great sea of humanity and believe that their life just does not matter.

We not only may feel small and insignificant, but we might also wonder why we are even alive. Sometimes life just seems meaningless. We watch children die young. We see wars that bring nations into tyranny or ruin. Even if we live in freedom until we are old, we realize that our lives are so brief they seem like a vapor that is here one moment and gone the next. It seems that the heartaches and struggles of life far outweigh the joys that we experience.

Apart from God, it is impossible to find lasting value in life. The answers to our most important questions can only be known when we realize that God exists, and that He has designed us for a very special purpose.

The Great God of Creation

God's Word teaches us that the whole universe was directly created by God. The first verse in the Bible boldly proclaims, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1). There is no attempt to prove that God exists. Most people will naturally conclude that He does. The greatness of the universe cannot be explained without the Creator. The Apostle Paul wrote that Creation speaks so clearly of God that no one can honestly deny His existence.

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

It is true that some men deny God's existence, but this is because they do not want to recognize Him as God. They cannot prove that there is no God. In fact, the more that we learn from science, the more difficult it becomes to deny God's design in the universe. There are billions and billions of galaxies, each one containing billions and billions of stars. The size and power of the universe is so great that we really cannot comprehend it. Still, everything within the universe works in an orderly fashion. It is no wonder that the Bible points to the stars as a clear testimony of God's greatness.

Psalms 19:1

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.*

The universe is not the only thing that helps us know the greatness of God. Here on earth, we are surrounded by magnificent creatures. Each one reveals God's wisdom and attention to detail. From the whales of the oceans to microscopic viruses, we see how every living being is unique and amazing. The smallest form of life is still too complex for mankind to duplicate, even with all our modern technology. God is great beyond our understanding.

The Unique Creatures of God

The created universe is enormous, and we know that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other planets throughout our galaxy. However, God has revealed to us in the Bible that mankind has a very special role among His creatures. We again find an account of this in the book of Genesis (which means "Beginnings").

Genesis 1:25-27

And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

*26 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.**"*

*27 So God created man in His own image; **in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.***

After God had made everything else, He made mankind "in His own image." Of all the creatures on the earth, only man shares God's traits of personality, intelligence, morality, and spiritual immortality. These

traits enable us to learn about God and interact with Him in a personal and meaningful way. God uniquely designed us to experience His greatness through a relationship with Him.

Separation from God

From the story of Adam and Eve we learn that the first humans had close interaction with their Creator. However, they chose to disobey Him, and God expelled them from the beautiful garden He had prepared for them (Genesis 3:14-24). The ugliness of their disobedience had driven a wedge between them and the God who had designed them. Although He never ceased to love mankind, God could not simply dismiss the grave choice of his rebellion. The joyous relationship He had designed for mankind was now broken, and all of humanity was affected.

From the moment that Adam sinned against God it was evident that man could not repair the damages of sin. We cannot erase our sins, yet we cannot have fellowship with God unless we are without sin. Our only hope is for God to rescue us. So, God promised Adam and Eve that He would someday provide someone to pay the debt mankind owed (Genesis 3:15). Then, the perfect justice of God would be satisfied, and a full relationship with God would be possible again. This was the first promise of the “Anointed One,” or Messiah. For thousands of years, people awaited the coming of the promised Messiah, even though they did not fully understand what He would do to pay for their sins. Meanwhile, God continued to teach men about their sin, giving laws that demonstrated the rebellion in their hearts toward Him. God also promised that someday He would change men’s hearts completely.

Ezekiel 11:19-20

*Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,
20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.
21 God's Purpose For Salvation*

Paying Our Debt

Finally, in His perfect time, God sent His own Son to become a man and deliver mankind from his trouble. More will be said about Jesus at a later time, but for now it is important to recognize that He willingly gave His own life as a substitute for ours. He lived a life without any sin, but endured the punishment that we deserved because of our sins.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For He made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Isaiah 53:5-6

***But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.***

6 All we like sheep have gone astray;

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

As a result of Jesus' death, God considers the price for our sins paid in full. He promises to apply this payment to each person who humbles himself and accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Much More than Forgiveness

Jesus suffered a great many things on our behalf. His sacrifice secures forgiveness for our sin, yet, Jesus died to accomplish much more. He was working toward a higher goal, one that God the Father laid out even before the world was created. Jesus made it possible for us to become adopted sons of God.

Ephesians 1:3-6

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

*4 just as He chose us in Him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,*

*5 **having predestined us to adoption as sons** by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,*

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

When God created mankind, God gave man the best gift that could be given: the gift of Himself. Of course, mankind did not realize how special this gift was, and we turned away from God in order to pursue our own foolish wishes. Mankind has thought that he would be happier if he was free from God, but he has only found misery. Still, God loves us so much that He determined to buy us back, or redeem us, from our self-inflicted trouble. He paid a high price to give to us the life with Him that He intended for mankind.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

*5 to redeem those who were under the law, **that we might receive the adoption as sons.***

John 3:16

*For God so loved the world **that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish **but have everlasting life**.*

Responding to God's Plan

God's plan for us is perfect and designed out of His love for us. We need to fully embrace this beautiful plan. We may be tempted to view God's salvation selfishly, focusing only on what God has done for us. While things such as forgiveness of sins and deliverance from Hell are good, we ought to be focused upon His greater plans to transform us into His children. Jesus died to bring mankind into a glorious relationship with God, so we have an obligation to yield to His purpose in our lives. We belong to Him, and not to ourselves.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and **you are not your own?***

*20 **For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.***

2 Corinthians 5:15

*and He died for all, **that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him** who died for them and rose again.*

Pursuing God

So what does God want you to do now that you belong to Him? How should you be using this life He has given you? Knowing God's great plan for us helps us to find the answers to these questions. The goal of our lives should now be to draw closer and closer to God, who loves us and is changing us to become like Him.

Paul is a good example to us. When he learned God's design for mankind, Paul desired nothing more than to know God better. He was willing to give up everything in his life in order to gain a deeper relationship with God through Jesus Christ. He understood that nothing is better than knowing God intimately.

Philippians 3:7-10

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

*8 Yet indeed **I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

*10 that **I may know Him** and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,*

The Fulfilling Life

All that the world has to offer us is temporary and shallow. People spend years of effort and great sums of money to find fulfillment in their lives, but they are never content. Once they have reached one goal that they thought would satisfy them, they begin to want something else. Every earthly pleasure that we experience is short-lived and cannot satisfy our deepest longings. Even our relationships with other people will bring us heartaches and griefs, no matter how much we love them. Everything on earth is imperfect and unfulfilling.

But God is perfect, and we have the opportunity to experience Him and happily serve Him. The pleasure and joy we experience here on earth are just a taste of what

God has to offer us through Christ Jesus. And the joy that God gives to His people is a joy that cannot be properly described. The Apostle Peter called it “joy inexpressible” (1 Peter 1:8). John wrote that fellowship with God leads us to joy that is “full” (1 John 1:4). And Jesus spoke of Himself as the “living water” that is able to satisfy our very souls (John 4:10-14). Only our relationship with Him can bring this true fulfillment in life.

Living with Purpose

We do not have the luxury to live to please ourselves, or to seek our own comfort. God has a plan for us, and that plan should be the goal of our lives. Like Paul, we must “*press on, that [we] may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of [us]*” (Philippians 3:12). He has given us the gift of Himself, and we should be living each day in a manner that will help us to love and enjoy Him more

Important Thoughts

- **God uniquely designed mankind to have a personal relationship with Him (Genesis 1:25-27).**
- **God paid dearly to restore what our sin had destroyed (Isaiah 53:5-6, 2 Corinthians 5:21).**
- **Salvation is not just about going to Heaven for our own enjoyment. It is about knowing and serving God forever (John 17:3).**
- **A relationship with God Himself is the most fulfilling part of our existence. It should be our consuming passion (Philippians 3:7-10).**

Chart 1 – Important Thoughts On the Purpose of Life