

## The meaning of life

The most important thing about our life on this earth is that we understand its purpose. Nothing is accomplished without purpose. Life is precious, and has a purpose. Since God loves us, we can easily surmise that He will help us fulfill our purpose.

The critical question is therefore: **What is your purpose?** This can also be asked in this way: "Why were you born?"

I have asked this question to many people and received many answers. There is only one true, correct answer; of course it can be expressed in many ways, but the essence of the correct answer is one.

Here are some common answers I have heard, from believers, and unbelievers, those who rarely go to church, and those who go to church often.

"To glorify God".

"To leave the world a better place".

"To be a good father or mother".

"To provide for my children and help them to success in life".

"To be successful".

"To do the most with the talents I have been given".

"To be saved".

There are many variations on this theme; none of these answers are correct, although the first and the last, above, at least come a little closer.

To know our purpose, we must be enlightened and taught by God, since "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17)

Anything that is good comes from the revelation of God, and the mind that is not prepared properly will never understand God, or His revelation to the human heart. That is why, by the way, after difficult sayings, our Lord would say "He that has ears to hear, let him hear". We all have ears, but not all of them hear.

Our purpose is referred to, but not in an obvious way, in the very beginning of Genesis, in the creation story. Moses tells us that just before man was created, God said: Let us make man according to our image and likeness" (Gen 1:26, partial)

This scripture is the first revelation that God is a Trinity of persons - He refers to Himself in the plural. We also learn that man is made according to the image of God and His likeness. Understanding what this means will reveal our purpose.

Let us digress for a moment. Another corollary question that is VERY important is: "**Why did God create man?**" The creation account does not tell us why.

There is a very simple, one word answer. The Scripture says that "God is love"<sup>1</sup>, and the Greatest commandment tells us to "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, we were created, simply because of love. God chose to create man in His image and likeness, because of love. Since love wants the best for its beloved, God, being the best, must want

to share of Himself with man.

This is why we were made in the image and likeness of God. In order for God to share of Himself with us, we must have the capacity to understand Him. He is a totally free and immortal being. We were also created to be immortal (once the human soul comes into life, it will never die, or cease to exist), and we also were created with free will, since God is free.

Free will, properly used, makes a man full of holiness, peace, the knowledge of God, and able to always freely choose good.

What is good? Since God is the only supreme good, we do good when we act as He acts. These actions are described by the virtues, love, kindness, and all the rest.

We were made immortal, and with the capacity to be holy. This is because God wants us to know Him, and it is impossible to know someone without being like them. The proud man does not understand humility. The rapacious man does not understand kindness. To understand God, we must become like Him.

This leads us to our purpose: to know God, and how it is fulfilled, by exercising and strengthening our God given free will to become like God, so that our soul is able to understand His revelation of Himself to our human heart.

The Scripture puts it this way:

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3)

There is obviously much more to this story, because it is obvious than many men do not know god or act like Him. We will discuss that problem in another letter.

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Priest Seraphim Holland 2012 [St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney, Texas](http://www.orthodox.net/journal/2012-11-19-the-meaning-of-life.html)

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<sup>1</sup> 1Jn 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

1Jn 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

<sup>2</sup> Mat 22:37-40 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Mar 12:29-31 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: (30) And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. (31) And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Luk 10:25-28 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? (26) He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? (27) And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. (28) And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

The Lord is referring to:

Deu 6:4-7 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: (5) And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (6) And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: (7) And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

and

Lev 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.