

THE FIVE BIG QUESTIONS OF LIFE By Stephen R. Graves

Do an Internet search of “Meaning of life” and you will find quotes like these:

“Life is like an onion. You peel it off a layer at a time and sometimes you weep.” – Carl Sandburg

“When I’m lost, I just look in your eyes. You show me the meaning of life.” – singer Kelly Clarkson

“The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity.” – author Leo Tolstoy

“Life is continuously being hungry.” – actor and politician Arnold Schwarzenegger

However, we cannot find the meaning in life on the Internet. I won’t try to tell you the meaning of life (though I have an opinion), but I am going to argue that in some ways, you have already answered that question. And not just that one. You already have answers to the five big questions of life: 1.Where did I come from? 2.Who am I? 3.Why am I here? 4.How should I live? 5.Where am I going?

Ask yourself, “What does my life display as my answers to these questions?” Look at your life: peek into your mind and heart. If you know you might not be objective, ask some close family and friends for their feedback. See what answers you have already formulated for these questions:

Origin – Where did I come from? We are fascinated by people’s origin stories. Where did they come from? We need to go back even further, however. Does the story of life go back to a causeless “big bang”? If the answer is “yes,” my allegiance should primarily be to myself, my survival and advancement. If, however, my answer is that we come from a Creator, it is worthwhile to ask questions like these:

Identity – Who am I? It has been well-documented that people under 30 years of age struggle with questions about individual meaning and identity, but the question of identity is one we all deal with.

What do you believe differentiates each one of us? It ties to the next question, one of meaning.

Purpose – Why am I here? Increasingly, we demand purpose at work, but we often fail to ask the question about life as a whole. Perhaps we are too distracted by smartphones, high-tech devices, and responsibilities to seek out an answer. Even if you say you do not know the answer, your life displays what you think the purpose of life is. Is happiness your barometer? Or maybe your life says something else: to share joy and kindness with others; leave a legacy; win and prove yourself; glorify God; or leave the world better than you found it.

Morality – How should we live? When asked about work-life balance, a prominent millennial CEO explained, “Having everything you want in the office and everything you want outside of the office.” But is that the goal? Or are there more objective rules to live by? Every religion has its code of ethics, but even the non-religious live with a sense of morality. C.S. Lewis wrote that religious or not, we all believe in concepts of right and wrong. What is permissible? What is best? For you, if it is the morality outlined in the Bible, God has given us difficult commands – love your neighbor as yourself, forgive whoever has hurt you, think of others above yourself, and many others.

Destiny – Where are we going? Even in a world where fewer and fewer people believe in God, people still believe in an afterlife. Even in a society where progress has led to pain and suffering in so many ways, humanity continues to seek more progress. We all believe we are going

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somewhere, whether individually or as a culture and a species. So, what is our destiny? What happens after we die? What you think of the destiny for yourself and for others should impact the way you live today.

Answering these five questions can settle your life like a foundation sets a building. When storms come, these can become the foundation you cling to, saying, “No matter what, this is what I build my life on.”

© 2022. Dr. Stephen R. Graves describes himself as an organizational strategist, pragmatic theologian, and social capitalist. He advises executives and business owners, as well as young entrepreneurs. He is author of numerous books and many articles, and a public speaker. His website is www.stephenrgraves.com.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. In considering the matter of origin – both for ourselves individually and the human race in general – what can Genesis 1:1,26-28 tell us?

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it....’” What do these verses tell us about God’s plans for humankind?

2. Concerning our identity, Genesis 1:27 also speaks to this: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them..” What does this say about God’s intentions for us?

3. How would you go about determining your life’s purpose, the overriding mission for your life? Consider what the apostle Paul wrote about how he viewed his purpose in Philippians 3:10. The Amplified translation of this verse states, “For my determined purpose is, that I may know Him, that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of his Person more strongly and more clearly....” How would you restate this passage? What is your reaction to it? Also consider Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” What does this mean to you?

4. In terms of morality, consider the admonition of the apostle Paul to his protégé Timothy, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” What does this say about how God wants His people to live and work? Do you think this applies to us in the 21st century marketplace? Should the Bible still be the standard? Why or why not?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Psalms 119:9-11; Ecclesiastes 5:18-19, 12:13-14; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 5:20

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