

CHAPTER 1: Why Am I Here?

Discovering that Everyone Has a Crisis of Purpose and Meaning

Reference: *Surprised by Faith*, pages 1-10 (fourth edition); pages 15-22 (third edition)

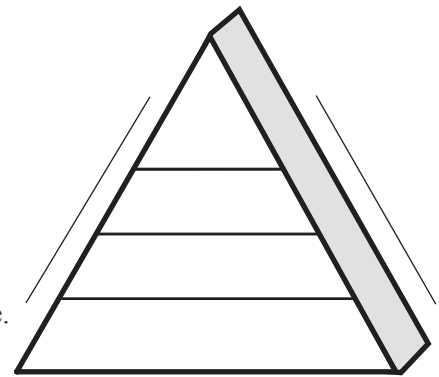
Getting Focused

- My origins
- My purpose
- My destiny

If you've wondered about these questions, you're not alone. They are familiar to most of us. In fact, our feelings of personal significance and self-worth often depend on finding satisfactory answers to these questions. But, if the finite physical world is all that exists (as some say) then there are no answers—and there is no ultimate point to our existence. This chapter will help you to understand this crisis of purpose and meaning which we all share.

Making the Discovery

1. Personal crises in our lives often cause us to think about God and faith. Three of these crises are _____, _____, and a lack of ultimate _____.
2. The physical world is _____, that is, it has limits and is dependent on something infinite to define or reveal its ultimate purpose. An eternal and absolute God would be an example of the infinite.
3. Our finite world consists of _____, _____, _____, and _____.
4. Some people think and teach there is nothing but the finite world—_____ God, _____ supernatural and _____ spiritual reality.
5. If this is correct, then there are no answers to the ultimate questions that determine life's purpose and meaning: My _____—"How did I get here?"; My _____—"Why am I here?"; and My ultimate _____—"What happens to me when I die?"
6. If we believe that the finite world is all there is, then we make a devastating discovery.



DISCOVERY #1

“Ah-ha!” Death is the ultimate and final conqueror if the finite world is all there is!

Application and Reflection

1. **The Bible says** that if there is no answer for death, then life is ultimately meaningless.

Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20, NIV).

How important is it for you to seek answers to the ultimate questions of how the world started, why you personally exist, and what happens to you when you die? (Circle one.)

Not Important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Important

Some people insist that their life’s purpose is to build a better future for their family and society. How would you answer someone who says that they live for family, to make the world a better place? (The following comments may help you to formulate an answer.)

Yes, family is a wonderful thing, and so is contributing to a better future society. Almost everyone would choose to live in a society of order, respect and freedom rather than one of chaos, destruction and fear. But that misses the point. These purposes are temporal and confined to the finite triangle (physical world) only. How is it determined which are the desirable values of a society?

Without an infinite and personal God who defines absolute values by His righteous character, the only ways values can be declared to be right or wrong are by a majority (vote) or by might (“might makes right”). That means values will change over time as people change their votes, or a political revolution occurs and values are determined by a despot. The greater question is whether you and I have any inherent worth as persons without regard to any contribution we make. If not, the significance of each individual is sacrificed for the race, i.e., you have no value except as you contribute to a future humanity in which you will never personally participate.

The Christian position is that individuals find true dignity and worth when they discover they are here by the choice of an intelligent Designer who created them for a purpose which transcends the grave. Everyone will give an account to God for their life. Everything we do matters for eternity! This *eternal* perspective gives ultimate significance to each individual, and gives the absolute context for making sense of our contribution to family and society in the *finite*.

2. **The Bible says** that accumulating everything in the finite world would not equal the value of an eternal life.

Will a man gain anything if he wins the whole world but loses his life? Of course not! There is nothing a man can give to regain his life (Matthew 16:26, TEV).

Write a list of the top three most important things in your life.

3. **The Bible says** that if we think death is the end of us, it will rob us of motivation and inspiration in the way we live our lives.

If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Corinthians 15:32b).

In a sentence or two state what you feel is the purpose for your life.

Looking Ahead

What if an infinite and personal God exists, One who created us and the physical world for an ultimate purpose? Is the existence of such a God only imagination or wishful thinking? In the next chapter, we’ll discover a test for whether a real and adequate God truly exists.

Answers to “Fill in the Blanks”: 1. death, guilt, purpose and meaning; 2. finite; 3. soil, plants, animals, people (The triangle diagram: “finite” and “dependent” around the triangle; “soil,” “plants,” “animals,” “people” in the triangle, from bottom up); 4. no, no, no; 5. origin, purpose, destiny