

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE | Fact Sheet

The Problem of Skepticism

1. Whether our lives have an ultimate purpose is the most basic question of our existence. It is *the* question.
2. More and more people, particularly in the West, believe there is no ultimate purpose.
3. The brutal facts are all will die, and the current space-time universe will come to an end.
 - a. “[L]ife is just a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness to nothingness.”¹
 - b. “What is life for? To die? To kill myself? No, I’m afraid of death. To wait for death till it comes? I fear that even more. Then I must live. But what for, in order to die?”²
4. Many New Zealanders have given up on the purpose question. Despair is the result.
5. Despair over the purpose question often results in mental illness or suicide.
6. On the purpose question, skepticism has little to say, and this is its biggest weakness.
7. Finally skepticism tells us to invent a purpose, even though there really isn’t a purpose.
8. Having rejected Christianity and having found skepticism inadequate, many Westerners are turning to Eastern pantheistic monism or New Age spirituality.
9. Deep inside, we want there to be a purpose. It seems to us there should be a purpose.
 - a. “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. ...If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. ...If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. ...I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same. ...All your life an unattainable ecstasy has hovered just beyond the grasp of your consciousness. The day is coming when you will wake to find, beyond all hope, that you have attained it, or else, that it was within your reach and you have lost it forever.”³

¹ Ernest Hemingway.

² Leo Tolstoy.

³ Armand Nicholi, *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*, Kindle ed. (Free Press, []). [].

Solomon's Journey

1. Solomon's experiential inquiry into the purpose of life is recorded in Ecclesiastes.
 - a. The pursuit of human wisdom left Solomon empty (Ec 1:16-17).
 - b. The pursuit of pleasure, laughter, and wine left Solomon empty (Ec 2:1-3).
 - c. The making of great works (houses, vineyards, gardens, parks) left Solomon empty (Ec 2:4-6).
 - d. The pursuit of wealth and material possessions left Solomon empty (Ec 2:7-8).
 - e. The pursuit of entertainment and sex left Solomon empty (Ec 2:8).
 - f. Solomon surpassed all who were before him, and yet he was completely miserable (Ec 2:9-11).
2. Solomon came to recognize that God alone provides meaning and purpose in life (Ecc 2:24-26).

The Biblical Hope

1. The biblical worldview answers the purpose question better than any other worldview.
2. Under the biblical worldview, man's primary purpose is to know, love, and serve the personal Creator God forever and ever (Ge 1:1, 26-28, 31).
3. Sin prevents us from fulfilling our purpose. As sinners, we cannot fulfill our purpose (Jer 2:12-13).
 - a. "All that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.... The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other."⁷
4. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus, the Son of God, has reconciled believers to God so that they may once again fulfill their purpose (Jn 3:16; 17:3).
5. Is there a purpose? Yes. A thousand times yes! Where skepticism says no, Christianity says yes!
6. Resources:
 - a. Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Beacon Press, 2006.
 - b. Nicholi, Armand. *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*. Kindle ed. New York: Free Press, 2002.
 - c. <https://www.exploregod.com/meaning-and-purpose>.