

# The Big Questions

## Sept. 18 1. *Is there more to life?*

\*\*\*\*\*

One evening a couple of weeks ago, Linda called to me, “The garage door is opening and closing by itself!” I went down to take a look, and there was Linda standing in the garage, watching the doors go up and down. It eventually stopped, but 4am that night I was fast asleep, and Linda heard the door going up and down again. It was eerie and unsettling.

She wanted answers, so she did what you do in 2022: she googled it. “Why is my garage door opening and closing by itself?” She showed me a site that explained reasons this happens and potential fixes, but unfortunately, none of the simple fixes worked. It turned out to be a bad logic board, so we had to get a new opener. But Google pointed us in the right direction – it’s handy that way.

Google is very helpful in answering simple, factual questions, like how many ounces in a cup, how far is it to Orlando, what are the most common boy names. We can get quick answers to questions – and sometimes the answers are even correct!

But then there are other questions that Google can’t answer, like:

- Who am I?
- Where have I come from?
- What is the purpose of life?
- Is there more to life than this?

These are big questions – questions we all face. We can spend a lifetime trying to find answers, and Google can only tell us what other people think.

How many heard of Jim Carrey? Almost everyone. OK, so we have just established that Jim Carey is famous – most of you know who he is, and his net worth is \$180M (I Googled it) So we can say that he is rich.

Here’s what Jim Carrey said: “I think everyone should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of, so they can see it’s not the answer.”

Maybe some of us are thinking, “I’d like to give ‘rich and famous’ a try and see if it the answer for me.” But Jim Carrey is saying that money and fame is fun on one level, but at the deepest soul-level it won’t satisfy our hunger.

A materialist will say there is nothing more to life than what you see. Graham Lawton is a writer for the scientific journal, *The New Scientist*.<sup>1</sup> He wrote, “Your life may feel like a big deal to you, but it’s actually a random blip of matter and energy in an uncaring and impersonal universe. When it ends, a few people will remember you for a while, but they will die too... Humans will go extinct; Earth and the sun will be destroyed. Eventually the

---

<sup>1</sup> Graham Lawton, “What Is the Meaning of Life?” *New Scientist* (9-3-16)

universe itself will end. Against this appalling reality, how can a human life have any real meaning?" – Graham Lawton, *The New Scientist*.

*The Game of Life* came out in 1960. The object of the game was to have the most money at the end, and the way to win was clear: your token goes to college, gets a job, buys insurance, and saves for retirement. In the game of life, the one with the most money wins. And the game sold well in the 60's and 70's.

But as years went by, the company realized that people had changed how they thought about life. So, in 2007 they released an update called, *The Game of Life: Twists & Turns*. In this version, players can score points by doing good things like saving an endangered species, opening a health-food chain, and recycling. There is no fixed path. The game provides multiple ways to start out in life — but nowhere to finish. Jill Lepore wrote, "This is actually the game's selling point; it has no goal. Life is ... aimless." It's one thing to spend an evening playing a table game that has no goal, but it is something else to spend a lifetime with no purpose.

It is hard to cope with an aimless life. So, most of us create our own purpose and goals. For some of us it may be family that gives meaning to life. Others of us define our lives by our work; it's what gives us identity and purpose. For some it might be maximizing pleasure. For others it may be the beauty of art, the joy of friends, accomplishments, or making a contribution. Yet, at some point we wonder: Is there something more to life? It's not just in the hard times --- even when our lives are pretty good, we may wonder.

Jesus told his disciples, and tells us, that yes, there is something more to this life. At one point he tried to tell them about life beyond this one. John 14:1-6 says,

*"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going." "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life.*

**When we know Jesus, we find the way, truth, and the life.** First, Jesus said he was "THE WAY." There are multiple layers to that statement. When we know Jesus, we are with the guide for our lives, and he will lead fulfill our purpose.

It's easy to think that purpose in life is about what we do: the job we work, the difference we make, the family we start, the place we live. **But our purpose in life is not just what we do, it is who we do it with: it is to do life with Jesus.**

The core purpose of life is knowing Jesus and doing life with him. John 14:3 says,

*When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.*

And Jesus promised “I will be with you always.” To be with Jesus gives meaning to everything we do. Think about it like married life: “What is the purpose of a marriage?” It is to build a life together, and ultimately, the specifics of that life don’t really matter; it is the togetherness that is the point.

That’s why the marriage vow we take is: “to have and to hold, for richer or poorer, sickness and in health, love and to cherish, until we are parted by death.” So, you don’t get married in order to make a certain amount of money or to live in a certain kind of house: it’s for richer or poorer. It doesn’t matter.

The goal of marriage is not to have a certain number of fun experiences or live a certain number of years: it’s in sickness and in health. The purpose or goal of marriage is to do life together – whatever that life holds. And along the way, your hearts and souls get knit together.

Not everyone will be married or do life with a spouse. But each of us are to do life with Jesus. The purpose of our lives is to do each day with Jesus. If you make something else your main purpose for living, eventually it will let you down. If we try to make a temporary blessing our heaven, we will find out that it doesn’t hold up.

Thomas Merton said, “We may spend our whole life climbing the ladder of success, only to find when we get to the top that our ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.” Jesus is the way to fulfill our purpose, and Jesus said he is the way to a relationship with God, and that is really good news, because I can’t make my own way to God.

Without Jesus, I wouldn’t know what God is like, or how to connect with him. And even if I did know, I wouldn’t be able to knock down the barrier between us. That’s because in my life I have sinned. Every one of us have, and sin breaks our relationship with God. Just like if you offended your neighbor. For example, let’s say you stole your neighbor’s Amazon deliveries, and he knew it. There would be an awkwardness between you. You wouldn’t be having lunch together.

Well, each of us have fallen short of God’s standards and sinned. That separates us from God and leads to death. But Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sin, so we are able to approach God without shame. He forgives us and invites us to himself. He shows mercy and grace.

A great moral teacher can point out how to live, but only Jesus paid the price for our inability to live up to that standard. When we enter a relationship with him, there is always more. When Jesus’ closest 12 disciples started out following him, they thought he was a good teacher. They listened to the Sermon on the Mount and thought, wow, he knows God.

Then as they followed him, they got to know him more. They saw him heal people, the blind received their sight, and paralyzed people walked again. They were amazed, and there was more...

Later, they were in a storm that threatened to capsize their boat, Jesus stood and quieted the storm, and they thought “Who *is* this guy??” And there was more...

Eventually, they saw him die on a cross, they thought everything was finished. But there was more. After 3 days, they saw him risen from the dead. They even ate breakfast with him. And there was more...

Years later the apostle John saw a vision of the risen Jesus in glory and wrote it down in the book of Revelation. There was always more.

When we do life with Jesus, we won't get bored with him. If we keep following and saying yes to him, we will discover and experience more with him. After all, he is the eternal one, the one through whom all things have been made, the healer of our souls. There is more to experience when you do life with him.

**Jesus said I am the Truth.** Some have told me, “I'm glad you find a relationship with Jesus to be meaningful and the purpose of life. That's great for you, but it's not for me.” That sounds generous and open-minded, but it doesn't make logical sense, because if something is true, it's true for everyone. If it's not true, it's not great for me because I am basing my life on an illusion.

Some things are a matter of opinion, others are objective fact. It's important not to confuse the two. Some things are a matter of opinion: like which music is best. How many think country music is best? How many think rock? Hip hop? Which is right?

Other things are matters of objective fact: like how much money is in your bank account. The bank might tell me, “You have \$400 in your account.” I might say, “I believe I have \$4,000 in my account. I am certain of it.” Will they say, “We hear you. For us, your account has \$400, but for you it's \$4,000. Who are we to judge and say you are wrong? You do you.” No, the bank will not hesitate to tell us that we are wrong about the amount in our account – even if we sincerely believe it to be more.

Sincerity does not make something true. We can be sincere and be sincerely wrong. Life would be chaos if we confused matters of opinion with matters of truth. So, the question is, is this matter of spiritual truth a matter of opinion or objective reality.

Jesus didn't say he taught the truth, or revealed the truth, he said “I am the truth.” When we are in relationship with Jesus, we have the truth about God and ourselves. We don't follow Jesus because we like his teachings better than Buddha's or Mohammed's. We follow Jesus because he rose from the dead. That's the reason.

And Jesus either rose from the dead or he didn't. It's not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of objective reality. As 1 Corinthians 15 says,

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then we are to be pitied. There is no reason to follow someone who says he will rise from the dead and then doesn't.

C.S. Lewis put it like this: "Christianity is a statement which, if it's false, is of no importance, and if it's true, it's of infinite importance. The one thing it can't be is moderately important." Jesus said he is the truth, and the truth will set us free.

**Lastly, Jesus said, "I am the LIFE."** The greatest mystery for humans is what happens after death. The good news is that there is someone who has been there and come back to tell us! That is Jesus. And he says, there is more.

In John 14 Jesus told his followers that there is more than this physical life. For some of us in the room that might not matter much because we can't conceive of ourselves dying, but it will happen at some point. Jesus says, there is *more beyond this earthly life*, and the way is to put our trust in Jesus and follow him, to yield our lives to his direction.

Knowing Christ is the purpose of life. Knowing him more deeply gives deeper meaning to life. ***There is always more.*** Over the next few weeks, we will look at big questions about God and life, and we invite you to join us. Today, I invite you to respond to Jesus' invitation to follow him to life.