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## C h a p t e r   O n e



# God's Purpose for Human Existence

**T**om and Becky left the pastor's office with decidedly different ideas running through their minds. Engaged to be married in a few weeks, they had come to the pastor's office for premarital counseling at his request, since they had asked him to conduct the marriage ceremony. Becky was already a believer. Everything Pastor Jenkins said about marriage being ordained by God and being holy made sense to her. She was beaming.

Tom, on the other hand, was not so excited. In fact he was deeply troubled. Growing up outside of a Christian home, he was taught that organized religion was a foolish and obsolete contrivance for simple minds. Surely, his teachers at all levels of school had taught him, man is a product of evolution, of random

chemical and electrical processes developing over millions of years. Hadn't science proved that over and over again?

The two had met at college and fallen in love. When they decided to get married, Tom agreed to become "a churchgoer" to gain the approval of Becky's parents. He decided that Becky was worth putting up with this nuisance, at least until they were married. Later, he would let her go to church if she wanted to, but he would stay at home. Right away, though, his carefully laid plans began to crumble. Many things he heard in church, things that challenged his years of secular education, moved Tom. Many "truths" he had learned were challenged in church in ways he couldn't counter or disagree with.

But he was an engineer by profession. Science was the god of his life. If it couldn't be worked out on a computer or in a laboratory, it wasn't real. The Garden of Eden was a fairy tale. It had to be. "Look at the fossil record," he told himself repeatedly. "Man is descended from crude, simple amoebae, developing over billions of years. Countless generations of life forms demonstrate that truth."

Inside, however, he couldn't reconcile himself to the troubling sense that there must be more to life than being an accidental byproduct of certain chemical energy processes. Life must have purpose and meaning. Becky was certainly no accident! And Tom's own life must have some meaning apart from his own impulses. That part of the scientific argument didn't compute.

The scientists just ignored man's inner self because they couldn't see it under a microscope!

It continued to bother Tom that he couldn't fit all the pieces together, and it bothered him more than he would admit that the whole picture seemed to make sense to Becky. But one day he realized, "Science is always coming up with new answers. They can't be far away from answering this one too." After that it bothered him less that Becky's answer still seemed more satisfying than his, but it still haunted him sometimes as he prepared to spend his life with her.

## THE MEANING OF LIFE

The age-old question jokingly debated in all entry-level college philosophy courses is "What is the meaning of life?" Not a few unfortunate students have been asked to write short but succinct papers trying to answer this simple but all-encompassing question. But a question that should be asked first is "Does God exist?" If we conclude that there is no God, then we are condemned to the hopeless task of finding meaning in a world that evolutionists readily admit is a product of random accident.

If, on the other hand, we conclude that the world could only have come about as a result of some creative force, a force beyond the imagination of men and their myths, a real and omniscient, omnipresent God, then the search for human meaning goes in an entirely different direction. If we accept the God of the Bible,

revealed to us in His holy Scripture and in the world around us that He created, then we may take the question a step further and ask, “What is God like?”

Dr. Howard Hendricks is a renowned seminary professor who has taught Bible study methods to hundreds of men and women preparing for the ministry. Dr. Hendricks was asked one day, “What is the most helpful insight that you have ever learned about studying the Bible?” He replied with this simple answer: “This book teaches me about a Person.” We can so easily lose sight of this truth as we study the Bible and learn principles and doctrine, but forget the Person to whom the principles and doctrines point. One can even seek for God’s will and forget to seek God.

## OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The book of Genesis makes it clear that God, despite His limitless power and ability, is a Being with a mind, will, and emotions, much like us. When He created the universe we live in, His crowning accomplishment was to create man in His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26–27). He created man with the capacity to enjoy His companionship. Such a statement tells us two important things. First, it tells us there were (and are) no other gods like the Creator in the beginning, thus declaring His own uniqueness. Second, He made man with a special care and design, apart from everything else, to be able to enjoy Him in all His perfection. To talk, to walk, to think, to play together. It may

be hard for you to imagine going for a walk in the park with God, but that's exactly what Adam and Eve enjoyed.

Of course, the Fall and Adam and Eve's ejection from Eden ruined the harmony of that perfect relationship. A frightful pall of death now surrounds man. Man is stained in his relationship with God since Satan's tempting, for evil cannot coexist with a supremely good and pure God. By seeking to become like God, Adam and Eve violated the one rule they could not break: acknowledging God as Master. Loving, caring, friendly, but still Master.

And yet man was not completely abandoned by God, for God continued to be a presence in the lives of succeeding generations of men and women. Through God's Son, Jesus Christ, who walked among us, we have been given a Savior, a way out from the despair and death that now haunts our lives. During His ministry on earth, God in human form revealed Himself to us and told us how we might know Him and His will for our lives.

## THE REVELATION OF GOD IN HUMAN FORM

*How does Christ reveal God's nature and will to us?* Jesus was talking to a group of "biblical scholars" of His day when He stated that the Scriptures bear witness of Himself (John 5:39). Jesus taught a Bible study on another occasion to His followers and explained how every part of the Bible pointed to Himself (Luke 24:27–

44). Jesus is the climactic revelation of “who God is.” Christ is “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:3). He is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). He is for this reason called the “Word” (John 1:1, 14). As our words reveal our hearts, so the “Word” revealed or explained the heart and character of God (John 1:18). For this reason, when his disciple Philip asked to see the Father, He replied, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). In Jesus, one learns the answer to the question “What is God like?”

God’s purpose was not to abandon man in his pride and idolatry but rather to redeem man. First Peter 1:18 states that God has redeemed man from his futile life of independence from God. God’s purpose for you is to bring you into a relationship with Himself. *Redeem* is a word that denotes an act of purchase. In New Testament times slaves were purchased from the slave market. The Lord redeemed man from being a slave to his own self-will. The purchase price is one of great and personal cost, for the Lord gave Himself in order to free us (Titus 2:14).

This act of redemption brings to those who believe eternal life, which is defined as an experiential knowledge or relationship with God (John 17:3). To be separated from Him is to experience death (Ephesians 2:1). But God’s purpose is that a relationship be developed so that we experience the life that He describes as satisfying and “abundant” (John 6:35; 10:10). Such a relationship necessitates communication.



We could never know God's will apart from His communicating to us through the Bible. We would live in continual darkness apart from the light of His revelation. Although we can see signs of God in nature, it is only through Scripture that we can come to a truer and more complete understanding of Him. God's will for you is to develop your relationship with Him. It is God's will to expose sins such as pride and idolatry in your life.

The first step in knowing God's will and understanding His purpose for you is to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior. In Jesus we see not only that God is holy and demands that sin be punished but also that God is loving and gracious. In Jesus, who took God's punishment for sin for you, you can find a way to escape God's wrath and have peace with God (Romans 5:1).

God is seeking to reveal Himself to you as you seek His will. Let me offer a simple suggestion that I have found to be very helpful. This idea came to me when I set aside a special time to seek the Lord concerning the dryness in my Sunday worship experience. I had ceased to have a sense of anticipation in regard to the Lord's day. It had dwindled to a mere duty.

As I sought the Lord concerning this situation, I walked away from that day with a solemn personal conviction. The conviction was to never have a Lord's day in which I would not seek to share my heart with God. This requires preparation and the enablement of God. I take time during the week to write down the three greatest concerns of my heart, finalizing it on

Saturday night. Then, going into the Lord's day, I lift up these concerns to Him. It may be an upcoming responsibility, an area in which I need direction, a relationship that needs His gracious aid, or a temptation. I write down any insight that God gives in response to the request, and I review it the next week. These sheets of paper are filed away and would be worthless to anybody else. But to me, they are a reminder that my God is a living God who knows my name and address and is willing to be involved in the affairs of my life. God reveals Himself to us in the context of the needs of our hearts. He wants to open His Word to us and show us what He is like as we seek His will.

### THE PURPOSE OF OUR REDEMPTION

God has redeemed you to be “zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:14). He has a place for you. However, all of our good works are to be an overflow of abiding in Him (John 15:5). Our relationship with Him is the primary thing. Our service for Him is secondary. If we aim at the primary thing, we will get the secondary. If we aim at the secondary thing, there is no assurance that we will get it, and for sure we will miss the primary. Jesus was encouraging His followers not to be anxious about food and clothing in Matthew 6:25–34. He concluded His teaching by encouraging them to seek first His kingdom and righteousness and to trust Him with the secondary things of His provision.

I have written to encourage you not to seek God's

will in an anxious spirit but rather to let your pursuit be after the primary thing of building an intimate relationship with God. A person who wants to know God must understand God's purpose for his or her life. God's primary purpose for your life is to build an intimate, loving relationship with Himself. This focused devotion will lead you into the full experience of every facet of His will for you.