



THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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The Purpose of Life

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

Most of us during our lifetime give some thought to why we exist. “Why am I here? What is the purpose of life?”

From a purely natural point of view, one can be very certain that the *cause* of his existence is his parents; but this does not address the question of *purpose*. Is the existence of the universe, our planet, and we as human beings purposeful or accidental?

We understand that no scientific proof for the origin of the universe is possible. This, however, does not keep scientists from studying nature in an effort to make what they believe to be educated guesses explaining how all things began. Yet, even those guesses and theories cannot address the question of *purpose*.

The most popular theories for the origin of the universe are some form of what is commonly referred to as “The Big Bang.” The theories do not address whether the “bang” occurred on purpose or by accident. It is *very* important to recognize that many who propose natural theories for how the universe began refuse to give serious consideration to any intelligent cause above and beyond nature (supernatural). Therefore, the best that the nature-only explanations can do is to suggest that “The Big Bang” was a big *accident*.

If the beginning of all things natural was by accident, then it was not on purpose. Therefore, it would be completely unreasonable to suggest that our existence has *any* purpose. Indeed, if life has no purpose, the whole concept of *purpose* must be classified as being beyond the physical (metaphysical) and unscientific. Purpose of *any* kind would have to be considered to be something pretended and not actual. In reality, any theory which suggests an accident as the cause of all that is real must likewise

conclude that life is really meaningless and wholly without purpose.

Such conclusions deprive men of the motivation to expend energy on anything they find to be tiresome, bothersome, or otherwise distasteful. Indeed, what could be the *purpose* of study if the conclusion of study is that there is no purpose? That is an oxymoron. Reasonable men should not accept such foolishness.

Which makes more sense to you: 1) the physical universe began on purpose, or 2) the physical universe began by accident? You may wonder why it is important to think about whether or not life began on purpose or by accident, but the answer you give will have a lot to do with how your values are formed.

The arguments for the existence of God are numerous. They cannot be explored in an article of this length, but it is important for you to have confidence that there are sound, logical reasons for believing in God.

It comes down to giving our honest and best effort to personally think about and give answer to the following logical choices:

**Either something exists,
or nothing exists**

Can there be any other choice? Some may balk at choosing one of the above, but to do so is not honest. There is only one logical answer because to even think about the question implies the existence of *something*.

**Either something has always existed,
or something came from nothing**

Ask yourself if there could have *ever* been a time when absolutely nothing existed. Additionally, ask yourself if there is *any* evidence that something real could come from

absolutely nothing. Can something come into existence without a cause or a context? There is no reasonable or scientific explanation for how something could come from absolutely nothing; therefore, we *must* conclude that something has always existed.

**What has always existed is either
natural, or it is supernatural**

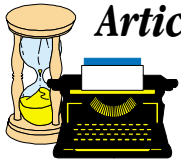
One may glibly profess belief that nature has *always* existed, but even those who believe in an accidental “Big Bang” affirm that there was a beginning (and that there will be an end). No scientific experimentation suggests that physical matter is eternal. Indeed, belief in eternal physical matter is the truly illogical leap of faith. Thus we are left either acknowledging that what is eternal must be superior to nature in power and purpose or reverting to the equally unscientific belief that something can come from nothing.

Notice that belief in an eternal supernatural cause is reached by common sense reasoning from what is self-evident. That which has a beginning must ultimately arise from a cause that has no beginning but which has existed eternally. Since all things natural have beginnings, the cause of nature and our existence must be supernatural.

Therefore, it is not blind faith that concludes that the supernatural and eternal Cause of all that has a beginning is God. It is a sound and reasonable faith that likewise gives us purpose. Indeed, it is exactly this reasonable conclusion that the Bible affirms (Gen. 1:1; 2:4; Psa. 139:13-16; John 1:1-3; Ac. 17:24-28; Rom. 1:20).

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Eccl. 12:13).

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HAIR-SPLITTING

By **LESLIE DIESTELKAMP** (1911-1995)

Today, if someone dares to suggest that the Lord's church be altogether authorized and limited by "what is written" in the New Testament, he is immediately accused of splitting hairs.

For instance, if someone suggests that we recognize that according to the New Testament, no church ever sent funds to another church except to relieve a specific need in the receiving congregation; that the church treasury was only used, with regard to benevolence, to relieve needy saints; that, in evangelism, churches sent directly to the

preacher in the field, and that in either benevolence or evangelism no church ever gave funds from its treasury as a gift to any human organization, this person is branded as a trouble-maker and a narrow-minded hair-splitter.

But this matter of hair-splitting is just a matter of perspective. To some, opposition to any of the following is hair-splitting: dancing, drinking, divorce, nudity, etc. To others, opposition to instrumental music in worship, Thursday night communion, observance of Easter and Christmas, supporting colleges from the church treasury, etc.

Actually, I don't lose sleep when people call me a hair-splitter. Some such people

don't understand the significance of what they say, and deserve pity. Others wouldn't split anything—not even if it means that truth and error must walk side-by-side. They no longer make any significant objection to a church-supported missionary society, mechanical instruments in worship, twice a week communion, etc. The fact is, the last group doesn't oppose anything with much zeal, except certain people whom they call "hair-splitters."

Brethren, be careful! When you brand someone as a "hair-splitter" you probably brand yourself as a compromiser!

This article first appeared in Truth Magazine, November, 1959

Is God's Grace Not Sufficient?

By **AL DIESTELKAMP**

After pleading three times for a "thorn in the flesh" to depart from him, the apostle Paul was told by the Lord, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). There has been much speculation about just what that "thorn" was that troubled the apostle, but it remains just that—speculation. Perhaps there was a purpose behind the Holy Spirit not inspiring Paul to reveal the exact nature of that "messenger of Satan" that plagued him. Maybe it's intended that we learn that there may be things or circumstances in our lives which we must suffer through, consoled by the knowledge that God's grace is sufficient for us.

When one is faced with serious illness, often the question is, "Why me?" Some Christians have difficulty understanding

why their prayers for healing are not answered in the way they hoped. I am not suggesting that people quit praying in such situations, but also remember that they are recipients of God's grace, which is even better than physical healing.

There are Christians who are working at jobs that are less than ideal, and long for other opportunities. There is nothing wrong with trying to advance one's career and earning potential as long as that does not jeopardize his spiritual relationship with Christ. However, if in that pursuit, the child of God would be required to compromise his convictions, the attitude must be that God's grace is sufficient.

In Jesus' explanation of the parable of the sower, He identifies four types of people who "hear the word of the kingdom" (Matt 13:18-23). "Wayside" people fail to understand the word, and Satan snatches the word away, causing them not to believe. "Stony-places" people hear, and happily receive the word, but stumble when tribulation or persecution comes. "Those among the thorns" also receive the word, but allow worldliness to choke out any fruitfulness. I think it's safe to say that those represented by the "Stony" and "Thorny" soils don't value God's grace sufficiently to endure the trials or to make the necessary sacrifices. In contrast, those represented by the "good ground" recognize that God's grace is sufficient no matter what else happens to them.

Sometimes the level of persecution seems almost unbearable to the one on the receiving end. It is especially hard to take when mistreatment comes from our own brethren. Occasionally a gospel preacher will be

treated badly by some within the congregation among whom he is working. When a faithful gospel preacher is asked to take his Bible elsewhere, causing grief for he and his family, it is a good time to reflect on how good God has been in bestowing His grace. If he is living right, and preaching as he should, he can boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Heb. 13:6).

The call to repentance is a time when a person must appraise the value of God's grace. If a person who owned a business establishment that thrived on evil were to avail himself of God's grace, repentance would demand that he shut that business down. The financial hardship that might result would be worth it because God's grace is sufficient.

A person whose past practice and inclination is toward homosexuality must become celibate, choosing to "suffer with the people of God" over "the passing pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:24). This is no more than God asks of the single heterosexual man or woman who chooses, or is unable, to marry.

Likewise, in our efforts to evangelize we often are faced with people whose lives have been complicated by divorce and remarriage. More often than not, the cause for divorce was not "for fornication," which, according to Jesus, means that any subsequent marriage involves adultery (Matt. 19:9). No doubt, true repentance in such cases is very difficult and test's one's faith, but even then, God's grace is sufficient.

It doesn't matter what inconveniences or emotional distresses that accompany repentance of sins, God's assurance is, "My grace is sufficient."



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Called to Patient Endurance

By RICK LIGGIN

For the Christian, Jesus certainly is our example. “What would Jesus do?” really is a good question to ask in every circumstance of life. After all, isn’t this exactly what Peter was urging when he wrote: “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example to follow in His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21)? Well, yes...and no. Peter certainly was turning us to Jesus’ example in this text, but not in a broad general way. In this context, Peter has a specific reason for pointing us to Jesus.

In the wider context of this passage, Peter instructs us about our general conduct in the face of anyone who might mistreat us (1 Pet. 2:11-12). We are to maintain excellent conduct and be respectful of all men, especially those in places of authority, even if they do not treat us fairly (2:13-17). Peter specifically addresses the servant’s relationship to his master: servants must do what is right and be submissive even to unreasonable masters (2:18-20); and when it comes to being unfairly mistreated as a servant, one must endure the abuse patiently.

According to Peter, there is no “credit” with God when one patiently endures harsh treatment that is deserved due to sin. If a servant does wrong, he ought to be punished; and so, when that servant patiently endures his punishment, there is no credit with God. But what if a servant has done nothing wrong; but has, in fact, only done what is right? What if he patiently endures harsh ill-treatment under these conditions? Well, this, according to Peter, is something that finds favor with God (2:19-20).

And Peter continues: “For you have been called for this purpose” (2:21). What purpose? We have been called (contextually) for the purpose of patiently enduring harsh unfair mistreatment! “What? We have been called to suffer unfair mistreatment...patiently?” Yes, that is exactly what Peter says here. “Why? Why have we been called for this purpose?” Because it is the example left for us by our Lord: He suffered unfair abuse, and He expects us “to follow in His steps” (2:21). “Well, just how much unfair mistreatment must I patiently put up with as a follower of Jesus?” The example of Jesus suggests that we’re to patiently endure *any* unfair mistreatment, even if that mistreatment involves being put to death (2:22-23).

“Wow! That’s radical! I’m sure glad I’m not a servant!” Oh, but you are! If you’re not in a servant relationship, you are probably in an employee relationship. And if not that, you may be a wife or husband (3:1-6; 3:7). You are, at least, a follower of Jesus

(3:8-17); and the submission urged in these verses is to be “in the same way” (3:1; 3:7) as that expected of servants (2:18). It is also to be in keeping with the example left by Jesus (2:21-25). Note especially statements like “without being frightened by any fear” (3:6) and “do not fear their intimidation” (3:14).

The point is that as disciples we are called on to do what is right in every relationship and to always be respectful of others, even if those others are unfairly mistreating us! And please note well: we are not just asked to “get through it” (maybe even kicking and screaming); we’re called on to suffer the abuse *patiently*. This is what really finds favor with God, and it is exactly what we must do...even if the abuse results in our lives being taken. I know this is a tall order; it’s one that, frankly, doesn’t excite me a whole lot. But it’s not asking us to do any more than what our Lord did. And if we really want to be like Him, it is how we will respond to unfair mistreatment: we will take it...patiently!

Now think about this: if we have, indeed, been called for the purpose of *patiently* suffering unjust mistreatment, even if that mistreatment involves taking my life, then surely I must be willing to suffer unfair mistreatment that is less severe. If I must be willing to patiently endure an unfair execution, surely I am expected to be able to patiently endure a few unfair harsh words or some thoughtless act on the part of another...maybe even from my own brother or sister in Christ. But do we do that?

To be quite honest, I have to admit, I don’t always do that so well. I don’t always patiently endure the mistreatment that others hand out to me. Oh, I may “take it” quietly in their presence, but inside I am sometimes frustrated and even angry. And I’ve noticed that I am not alone in that. Some of us get our feelings hurt if someone criticizes us...even constructively; we get “offended” if we get left out of some activity or if someone forgets to speak to us when they enter the church building. I am, in fact, amazed at the petty things that we sometimes let “get under our skin” or hurt our feelings. And instead of enduring it patiently, we get mad and tell the offender off, or we start to pout and give him the silent treatment. And how hard is it for some of us to forgive those who hurt! We hold a grudge or let ourselves get bitter.

Listen, brothers, if we can’t patiently endure a little criticism or a harsh word or a thoughtless deed on the part of someone else, what in the world makes us think that we will be able to patiently endure persecution or even execution for doing what is right? Don’t we understand that these minor forms of mistreatment help us build our endurance, so that we can ultimately face even greater and more difficult forms of abuse?

Yes, Jesus is our example in everything; but He is especially our example in how we are to act when we are unfairly mistreated. Are we really ready to follow His example?

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Enjoy your wife!

By STEVE FONTENOT

“Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life, and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun” (Eccl. 9:9).

Do you?...or have you forgotten how to enjoy life with the woman you love? Are you too busy? Then you *are* indeed too busy! Life is fleeting. You will not have your youth long—nor your wife’s. In fact, you will not have your wife long, for life at its longest is but “a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (Jas. 4:14).

In His love, God has given us the wonderful privilege to love and enjoy a wife in our short journey through this world. “This is your reward in life...” Are you ordering your time and activities so you can savor your reward? Have you exchanged this reward for a career, a hobby (hunting, fishing, golf), more things, more money...? Don’t love her anymore? Maybe that’s because you did not take time to *enjoy her*.

So, people just exist together. They may find someone else to enjoy. Or someone else to enjoy them. If only we would listen. “*Enjoy life with the woman whom you love...*”

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Seeking Answers to the Wrong Question

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

W e sometimes feel consolation and even justification in the fact that someone is unable to tell us something we want to do (or are doing) is wrong. There are two fundamental problems with this approach:

Wrong Person

Consulting spiritually minded friends, family, elders, preachers and other resources can be helpful, but we must remind ourselves that they are not the final authority on anything. Asking others must simply be an extension of asking God. Their job is to “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11) by helping us see things in Scripture we have missed in our personal study and understand things we have misconstrued.

To act in faith we must understand and accept that what we are doing is true from God’s word. Others cannot study it out and grasp the details for us. Anything other than personal understanding places our faith in men rather than in God, even if the men are right. Additionally, the response of others may be unknowingly tainted by ignorance, prejudices, experiences, likes and dislikes, and the desire to please and not hurt the feelings of others. So, when others say they see nothing wrong with something it still is

not permission to act. Confidence is only found in knowing God’s will from Scripture, not in what others say (no matter who they are or how many there are of them).

Wrong Question

Asking whether something can be proven to be wrong may be a starting point, but it isn’t an adequate ending point. When the scripture says, “Test all things, hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21), it gives us what we’re supposed to be looking for. We aren’t just looking for what tests out to be bad, we are looking for what is proven to be good. We are only permitted to “hold fast”—believe, act, continue to do—what we know is good. It isn’t enough to say, “I’m not convinced it’s wrong and so I’ll do it.” We

have to be able to say and show from God’s word, “I know it’s right and so I’ll hold to it.”

Asking, “Is it wrong?” is not necessarily the same as asking, “Is it right?” We may not have clear statements in Scripture saying that something is wrong (especially for modern forms of some actions), yet if we also can’t be certain it is good in the eyes of God we must not act. We must be “fully convinced” in our own minds (Rom. 14:5) that it is right before acting. This kind of certainty does not come from the “It doesn’t say not to” argument—it only comes from knowing what God thinks about it as revealed in His word (1 Cor. 2:6-16).

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‘All to God’s Glory’ is Theme of Men’s Weekend Bible Study

The seventh annual *Men’s Weekend Bible Study* will be held Friday night through Saturday afternoon September 17-18, 2010 at a campground near Manteno, Illinois. This year the overall theme is *All To God’s Glory*. Following are the topics and speakers:

Friday PM: *Philippians 1:9-11* ~ Rick Liggin

Saturday AM: *Accurately Handling God’s Word* ~ Steve Wolfgang
Relationships ~ Paul Thomas ~ Andy Diestelkamp ~ Gary Watt
(young men) (young married men) (older men)

Discern Good and Evil ~ Mark Russell

Saturday PM: *Facing Our Faults* ~ Keith Barclay
All To God’s Glory ~ David Diestelkamp

This event is organized by Christians in the northern and central Illinois area, and is not the work of any congregation. It is the result of the efforts put forth by its organizers and those willing to lead the various Bible studies. For more information and online registration go to: www.menswbs.com, or e-mail Tim Zydek at <timzzz61@gmail.com>

Voluntary Partners

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Bookkeeping Error*	75.00
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 618.26
Funds available for past issue	1,807.50
Surplus	\$ 1,189.24

Donations (as of 8/1):

Jerry & Sue Brewer, AL	\$ 50.00
Mary N. Mayhall, AR	100.00
Anonymous, KS	100.00
TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 250.00
Surplus from past issue	1,189.24
Funds for this issue	\$ 1,439.24

*The bookkeeping error listed above was due to double-reporting two donations (one \$50 and one \$25). Even though we still maintain a sizeable balance, some of that balance will be needed to renew our annual mailing permit (\$180) as well as renewal of our website’s domain name and hosting fees for two more years (\$185). Therefore, this issue with these extra costs is expected to be about \$900, which would leave a balance of nearly \$540. We want to thank all of our volunteer partners, past and present, for this help.



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