

Studio Revolution

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Seeking Purpose in Times of Despair

By George Mullen

Most of us at some given point begin to seriously question the purpose of our lives. Not so much trying to solve the macro question of what the meaning of life is, but rather on a deep personal level. What is my purpose? I seem to have little to show for all these years, has life passed me by? Has my life been a meaningless waste? On some level, we all need to feel that our life has purpose. Without it, emptiness and nihilism triumph. And if such feelings become commonplace in an era defined by joblessness and economic woe, the combination could be lethal – the recent record high levels of suicide may be one such manifestation. As such, it is more important than ever that we understand the purpose of our lives.

Common sense leads most of us to recognize that the magnificent creation that surrounds us did not just happen out of the blue via some big bang or other. Atheism remains but an answer in absurdity – in effect negating the questions themselves. There is a *reason* and a *cause and effect* to everything – this we know scientifically – it follows that there is with the advent of life. As such, agnosticism is appropriately where we all should begin our search for purpose – for some it will lead to Jesus, for others to Yahweh, Buddha, Vishnu or something entirely different. No one can definitively prove to another person that which is the correct path, if in fact there is one. Each individual must seek and find one's own way.

Five observations:

1. Most of us recognize a Higher Power as the origin of our existence – be it through creationism, evolution or a combination of the two. As such, it follows that the Higher Power itself is our #1 Purpose in Life. After all, the Higher Power is the only entity that knows the reason and purpose for our existence, as well as can provide the cues for to how to conduct our lives. Interpreting such cues is of course the great riddle, but several are revealed from the facts we already know.
2. Not one of us had a choice as to whether we would exist or not, we were simply born into life. Nor were any of us given the choice as to who would be our parents, siblings, early family friends, or what community we would be raised in. At the Higher Power's direction (whether at the beginning of creation itself, individually tailored to each of us, or randomly) we each landed in a unique situation. Because there is a reason for everything, it follows that there is a reason for our individual situations as well. Therefore, our #2 Purpose in Life is the

people that landed in our lives – our parents, siblings, spouses, children, friends, and the community at large.

3. The Higher Power gave each of us a unique set of talents, skills and interests – be it rearing children, cooking, teaching, art, literature, science, technology, medicine, business, finance, construction, engineering, athletics, fishing, farming, and so on. It follows that our #3 Purpose in Life is to pursue our individual talents, skills and interests. Why otherwise would we have them if we weren't meant to use them?
4. A central component of human nature is to build and create, and we do so in a myriad of ways as expressed above. This is almost always accompanied by a common pursuit of moving forward, seeking progress. This attribute (along with the creation of life itself) reveals that *destruction* and *destructive behavior* are in fact the antithesis to human nature. It follows that the Higher Power would never call upon us to embrace destructive behavior toward others or ourselves.
5. We each entered life without a single material possession. So too, we each will exit life without a single material possession. Therefore, a path focused on seeking material possessions is a path without meaning or purpose.

We were all born and we will all die. What we do in between is what matters. True happiness is derived from knowing one's purpose in life, and an honest sense that one is on the road to fulfilling it. The road is straight forward, emotionally draining at times to be sure, but highly rewarding. It means focusing on the Higher Power's cues for us, renewing our commitments to our spouses and children, taking a greater interest in our elderly parent's care, being cordial to ex-spouses, embracing and forgiving estranged family members, giving serious thought to the well-being of our friends and acquaintances, trying to catch those perilously on the edge before they spiral downward, and embracing our individual talents, skills and interests.

Once we collectively realize and embrace these revealed purposes in our lives, a more loving, caring and civil society will surely follow. We all share this purpose in life.

About the Author: Mullen is a principal of *StudioRevolution.com* in San Diego.