

Chapter 1

WHAT DOES LIFE HAVE TO OFFER?



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Imagine two embryos talking in the womb. One says: "I believe there is something after birth - a life outside this womb." The other shakes its head: "How can that be possible? We have everything we need here: food, warmth, protection. There is no way of knowing if something is out there." The first embryo assures the second: "Oh, I am sure that a new world awaits us. A loving mother who will take care of us." – "Who is this mother?" asks the other. "There is no proof of there being one." – "Yes, there is," assures the first. "When we are very quiet, I can hear her heartbeat and sometimes even her voice."

This story invites us to reflect on our own reality. Is there more than what we can see? Could there be a God who created us? And if so, why are we here?

The five big questions of life

Sooner or later, everyone will ask themselves the fundamental questions of life:

1. **Origin:** Where do I come from?
2. **Meaning:** Why am I here?
3. **Morality:** What is right and what is wrong?
4. **Destination:** Where am I going?
5. **Suffering:** Why is there pain and evil in the world?

Perhaps you have already asked yourself similar questions, or maybe they are only now arising in you. The Bible makes it clear that we do not have to search for answers alone, but that God is ready to reveal Himself to us. So let us go and discover Him together.

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Jeremiah 33:3 | The Bible, NIV

Evidence of God's existence

You probably know people who say: "You cannot prove that God exists." Perhaps you are not yet fully convinced that there is more than what we can see with our own eyes. But just because you cannot see something does not mean it does not exist. A well-known saying goes: "The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

There are many indications of the existence of God, and we would like to take a closer look at four of them.

The cosmological explanation: God as the origin

The Bible begins with a bold statement: God is the creator of all things.

| *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

| Genesis 1:1 | The Bible, NIV

The cosmological argument states that everything that exists has a reason to do so. The universe has a beginning - so there must first be a reason that was not self-created. We call this reason God.

| *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

| Psalm 19:1 | The Bible, NIV

The teleological explanation: God as designer

Imagine a meticulously crafted watch, with gears that mesh perfectly and a mechanism that is not off by a single second. No one would believe that it was created by chance. In the same way, the incredible order and fine-tuning of the universe points to an ingenious creator.

Our universe is finely tuned - from the physical constants to the incredible complexity of nature. If even one of these constants were calibrated slightly differently, life on Earth would not be possible.

| *For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, [...]*
| Colossians 1:16a | The Bible, NIV

Even Charles Darwin, the founder of the theory of evolution, had to admit: "To suppose that the eye [...] could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest possible degree."¹

Every detail of nature bears witness to a Creator who has designed everything with wisdom and love. Look at the beauty of nature, the starry sky, or the tiny details of a flower. Everything points to God.

– **EXPERIENCE: CONSCIOUSLY EXPERIENCE CREATION** —————

Take time today to go out into nature. Stop and observe: the play of light and shadow, the texture of a leaf, the chirping of birds. Ask yourself: Can this all just happen by coincidence? Ask God to open your eyes to the beauty around you.

| *Be still, and know that I am God.*
| Psalm 46:11a | The Bible, NIV

¹ Cf. Darwin, Charles, On the Origin of Species

The moral explanation: God as the source of values

Have you ever done something that felt wrong? This feeling is called conscience. It is the inner voice that tells us what is right and what is wrong. But where does it come from?

The Bible says that God has placed this voice within us:

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.

Romans 2:14-15 | The Bible, NIV

The existence of a universal moral standard points to a moral lawgiver. Without God, the ideas of good and evil would be purely subjective. However, our experience shows that there are objective moral truths.

Moral values such as justice, compassion, and honesty are not simply products of evolution. They reflect the character of God, who created us in His own image.

So God created mankind in his own image.

Genesis 1:27a | The Bible, NIV

Personal experience: God who encounters us

The fact is: Millions of people around the world report that they have encountered God personally - through prayer, miracles, or being changed within.

Come near to God and he will come near to you.

James 4:8a | The Bible, NIV

Perhaps you also know someone who has told you about an encounter with God. Such experiences are difficult to prove scientifically, but for those affected they are real and life changing. God is not a distant, impersonal creator, but a Father who knows and loves you.

You are no coincidence!

The following quote is attributed to the church father and philosopher Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD):

"People travel to wonder at the height of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars; and yet they pass by themselves without wondering."

We are often hardly aware of the miracle that humans are, of the miracle we ourselves are. God created you on purpose - with a plan for your life. Your origins, your family, even the place where you live are part of this plan. Just imagine: One sperm out of 500 million made the race, and you came into being. When God appointed the prophet Isaiah, He said to him:

This is what the Lord says – he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you [...]

Isaiah 44:2a | The Bible, NIV

The same applies to you. God made you wonderfully. You are not a mistake. You are not a coincidence.

| *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful [...]*
Psalm 139:14 | The Bible, NIV

The freedom to shape your life

Many people consciously or unconsciously have a life motto that accompanies them. Perhaps you want to achieve something specific, do a lot of good, see as much of the world as possible, or have as much fun as possible. Your life motto is probably also shaped by experiences you have had or by values that are important to you. These guiding principles can drive, inspire, and motivate us - they give our lives direction.

Here are some of the most common “motivators”:

Aiming for money and wealth

Material wealth exerts a strong attraction. The sentence “The more money you have, the happier you will be” seems plausible at first glance. But the Bible warns against this temptation:

| *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*
1 Timothy 6:10 | The Bible, NIV

Wealth alone never leads to true joy or fulfillment. At first glance, it may seem that money sets us free to make all our dreams reality. However, the desire for more and more often leads to dependency and can tempt us to jeopardize our relationships, our integrity, and ultimately our inner peace.

Acquiring education and knowledge

Education is often seen as the key to self-realization. But knowledge alone is not enough to give life a deeper meaning. Solomon, the wisest man in the Bible, recognized this:

For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

Ecclesiastes 1:18 | The Bible, NIV

Science and education are valuable achievements that play an important role in society: They help us to understand relationships in the world, to describe processes and laws, and thus to realize the divine mandate to care for creation (Genesis 1:28). But science alone cannot answer the deepest questions of life - it shows us how the world works, but not why we are here or what the meaning of our lives is. Nor does it relieve us of making a decision for or against God.

Maintaining relationships

Relationships are an essential part of our lives. But no human being can fill the emptiness in our hearts. People can disappoint us, hurt us, or leave us. If we make our entire happiness in life dependent on a partner, child, or friend and the relationship eventually drifts apart, what is left? Jesus makes it clear to us that the most important relationship is the one with God:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 22:37-39 | The Bible, NIV

Pursuing a career

Career goals and professional success are important aspects of life, but they must not be our main goal. At the end of our lives, it will not matter how far we have risen and what title we have achieved. The more important question will be whether we have used our abilities to serve others and honor God. Do we allow ourselves to be rushed through life by the pursuit of status? Or do we trust that God will place us in the right position at the right time and in the right place? Jesus also gives us a vision:

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33 | The Bible, NIV

Celebrating fun and pleasure

Some people seek fulfillment in pleasure and enjoyment. The well-known sentence by Goethe expresses this attitude:

"Life is too short to drink bad wine."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

But the Bible reveals that pleasure alone does not satisfy. It is not wrong to enjoy good things (1 Timothy 6:17). But if the search for the next thrill dominates our lives, in the long run we will need even more intense and extreme experiences to feel alive. We can become reckless in the process, harming ourselves and those around us. And we miss out on the greater plan that God has in store for our lives.

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

Mark 8:36 | The Bible, NIV

Listening to your heart

Another very common principle in our time is to make decisions based on emotions. In our society, personal perception is seen as a moral compass and the question of what “feels good for you” is elevated to a universal guideline. But emotions can be deceptive:

For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come - sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.

Mark 7:21-23 | The Bible, NIV

Society tells you: “Follow your heart!” But the Bible teaches us:

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Proverbs 4:23 | The Bible, NIV

Emotions are good companions but poor guides: They can fade as quickly as they arise and often tempt us to take a one-sided and subjective perspective of things. We need the Word of God as a firm foundation to shape our lives wisely and with the future in mind.

The search for more

Many people feel that something is missing. They are looking for a meaning, a purpose, and a goal in their lives - something that will last. But if money, knowledge, career, relationships, and fun cannot fulfill us in the long term, where can we find happiness? What can satisfy this hunger or thirst within us? In the Bible, we read that it was God Himself who placed this longing in our hearts when He created us.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11b | The Bible, NIV

He created us with this longing because He also longs for a relationship and to have fellowship with us. He is the one who wants to satisfy this longing within us. Jesus gets to the heart of the matter:

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10b | The Bible, NIV

God has more to offer you

But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

John 4:14 | The Bible, NIV

God has more in store for you than you can imagine. He is your Creator and knows you better than you know yourself. He not only called you into being, but also has a good plan for your life - a plan that goes far beyond what this world has to offer. In Him you will not only find meaning, but also true peace, deep joy, and a love that is independent of performance and perfection.

This love has a name: Jesus Christ. He came to show us how big God's heart is for us. Through Him, we can experience how our past is healed, our hearts are renewed, and our lives are given a new perspective. God invites us to live with Him - not as a distant concept, but as a source of hope, strength, and unshakeable security.

What is your answer?

You have various options of how to respond to this message:

- Perhaps you already know Jesus personally: That is wonderful! Continue to live out this relationship.
- Maybe you are skeptical: That is okay. Keep searching, read the Bible, and ask questions.
- Maybe you want to know more: Read the New Testament and stay open to God's words.

— 00 ACTION STEP: GIVING GOD A CHANCE —

If the God of the Bible exists, what does that mean for your life? Maybe you are skeptical. Maybe you have a lot of questions. That is okay! God is not afraid of your doubts.

Here is an invitation: Pray the following with an open heart. Talk to God as if He were real and invite Him to reveal Himself to you.

Prayer:

"God, if you exist, reveal yourself to me. Help me recognize and experience you. I want to know if you are real. Amen."

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you.

Jeremiah 29:13-14a | The Bible, NIV

Hang on - read the Bible, ask questions, talk to people who are living out their faith. Today can be the beginning of your journey with God!

Further reading for your in-depth study:

- *“The Purpose Driven Life - What on earth am I here for?”* by Rick Warren. (Zonder-
van, 2004)