

EASTER: WHAT GETS YOU OUT OF BED? — Discussion guide

1. **REMEMBERING:** When in your life have you had the clearest sense of any kind of purpose?
2. **REFLECTING:** Is your sense of purpose stronger for world history or for your personal history?
3. **DISCOVERING:** Read the following quotes and passage. Discover and discuss what they reveal about the possibility of ultimate purpose, what Scripture reveals about ultimate purpose, and insights into discovering the role you play: your individual purpose. I've taken the liberty of placing key phrases in *another italicized font*.

THE POSSIBILITY OF ULTIMATE PURPOSE

I had always believed that the world involved magic: now I thought that perhaps it involved a magician. And this pointed to a profound emotion always present and sub-conscious; that this world of ours has some purpose; and *if there is a purpose, there is a person*. I had always felt life first as a story: and *if there is a story there is a story-teller*. (G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*)

Deep within history, as it gets itself written down in history books and newspapers, in the letters we write and in the diaries we keep, is sacred history, is God's purpose working itself out in the apparent purposelessness of human history and of our separate histories. (Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey*)

What I developed through the writing of them [novels] was *a sense of plot* and, beyond that, a sense that perhaps life itself has a plot—that the events of our lives, random and witless as they generally seem, have a shape and direction of their own, are seeking to show us something, lead us somewhere.... In the midst of our freedom, we hear whispers from beyond time, I think, sense something hiddenly at work in all our working whose plot it is either for our sakes to make us truly and everlastingly human before it is done or, failing that and perhaps no less for our sakes, to let death be the merciful “coup de grace” to our less-than-humanness.... I choose to believe that, *from beyond time, a saving mystery breaks into our time at odd and unforeseeable moments*. (Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey*)

Every mythic story shouts to us that *in this desperate hour we have a crucial role to play...* Things are not what they seem. We are not what we seem. Of all the Eternal Truths we don't believe, this is the one we doubt most of all. Our days are not extraordinary. They are filled with the mundane, with hassles mostly. And we? We are...a dime a dozen. Nothing special really. Probably a disappointment to God. But as Lewis wrote, “The value of...myth is that it takes all the things we know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by ‘*the veil of familiarity*.’” You are not what you think you are. There is a glory to your life that your Enemy fears, and he is hell-bent on destroying that glory before you act on it. (John Eldredge, *Waking the Dead*)

If you know what something is designed to do, then you know its purpose in life. A retriever loves the water; a lion loves the hunt; a hawk loves to soar. It's what they're made for. *Desire reveals design, and design reveals destiny*. In the case of human beings, our design is also revealed by our desires. (John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*)

ULTIMATE PURPOSE IN SCRIPTURE

What is the real point of our existence? Jesus was confronted with the question point-blank one day, he boiled it all down to *two things: Loving God and loving others*. Do this, he said, and you will find the purpose of your life. Everything else will fall into place. Somewhere down inside we know it's true; we know love is the point. (John Eldredge, *Waking the Dead*)

I think we'd all say that *the purpose of the church...is to spiritually form people to love God and others* and themselves so that they can live life to the full in God's kingdom, in the way of Jesus. We want to change the world, but that requires people who learn to be the revolution they want to see in the world. (Brian McLaren, *The Last Word and The Word After That*)

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:34-40)

*The meaning of life, its total meaning, which imparts to it its unity despite the diversity of its various stages, is obedience to God. In growing up and developing, the child is obeying God, who gave him life and its wonderful power of growth. In making his choices, the adolescent is obeying God, who granted him the liberty to choose and the responsibility of choice. In throwing himself passionately into all his creative adventures, the adult is obeying God, who has made him in his own image. And in detaching himself from particular things and ephemeral actions, and attaching himself instead to transcendent values, in accepting his human condition, necessarily frail, temporary, limited, and incomplete, the aged person is still obeying God, who made men “strangers and exiles on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13). (Brian McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian*)*

Two key phrases have become identified with [Jean-Pierre de Caussade's] name. The first, ‘*self-abandonment to divine providence,*’ implies a dynamic surrender of ourselves to the will and way of God. The second, ‘*the sacrament of the present moment,*’ awakens us to the requirement of doing our duty, whatever it may be, a carrying out of God's purpose for us not only this day, or this hour, but this minute, this very minute. (Richard Foster, *Devotional Classics*)

4. **CONNECTING:** Which of the words above provide you with the clearest hope of discovering your ultimate purpose and give some insight into your individual purpose?
5. **RESPONDING:** When and with whom will you continue discussing these ideas in the week ahead?