

ASK—because your questions matter

The Ask series is designed to both inform and answer the four questions that really matter to most people about life. This series gets to the foundation of origin, meaning, morality and destiny. Where do I come from? Why are we here? What's right what's wrong? Where are we going? Dr. Ravi Zacharias and his team take us into the depth of these questions while leading us out with sound answers, rooted in the scriptures this series leaves you both enlightened and empowered.

Q and A with:

Dr. Ravi Zacharias - Born in India in 1946, Ravi immigrated to Canada with his family twenty years later. While pursuing a career in business management, his interest in theology grew; subsequently, he pursued this study during his undergraduate education. He received his Master of Divinity from Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois. Well-versed in the disciplines of comparative religions, cults, and philosophy, he held the chair of Evangelism and Contemporary Thought at Alliance Theological Seminary for three and a half years. He has been honored with the conferring of six doctoral degrees, including a Doctor of Laws and a Doctor of Sacred Theology.

Session 2:4 Living Purpose

Key Concept: Happiness is not the goal of our lives but the by-product of a life lived with purpose.

Key Verse: 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.**11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

John 15:4, 11 ESV

Objective: To demonstrate that purpose is the primary motivation behind everything that we do.

Why would life without purpose be unbearable?

Purpose is instilled in humanity from the beginning. We are made in the image of God, (Gen 1:27) that means among other things every life has the mark of the sacred on it and is of essential worth.

- Apart from the one who created, life is without purpose.
- With God life has purpose and meaning and seems doable.
- Going through life without purpose is heartbreaking.

Engage: (Ephesians 2:10) this verse ultimately tells us some important things about our purpose as humans? How do you unpack this verse?

How does one discover purpose?

We believe as Christians that human beings are made in the image of God. Therefore, our lives are sacred and of essential worth. No decision is unimportant then or inconsequential.

- When one asks this question it means one way or the other you realize you're hard wired to ask that question.
- The question of purpose begins with the fact that life is sacred and valuable – from that definitions emerge.
- “If there is no sacredness to life anything is permissible.” **Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

Scripture: (Jeremiah 29:13) (Joel 2:12)

Engage: Since life being sacred is an important premise, how would you define sacred? Why do you think we must begin this conversation with life being sacred?

How does purpose determine one's life?

- If a sense of purpose is imbued in human life by God then there is a higher moral authority that governs our choices and our relationships.
- We answer the question of purpose everyday.
- Having a sense of purpose determines our relationships, careers and educational choices.
- Remove the sense of purpose and all of our foundation for treating humans with worth crumbles away. Abuse and violation will result.

Scripture: (Psalms 8:4) (Psalms 144:3)

Engage: What is it about Jesus that gives us a sense of purpose?

A person who does not believe in God, where do they find their purpose, what is the result?

How is the story of the rich, young ruler, in Luke 18 a story about ultimate purpose?

The rich young ruler's question of Jesus (“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”) is really a question concerning ultimate purpose. At first, Jesus doesn't answer his question directly, but rather gives an answer that is intended to draw him out, and ultimately walk him into God's design for his life.

- We can clearly see how wealth can cause a person to forsake God and ultimately their own purpose.
- When God becomes the focal point of life, there are ways in which the rich man learns how to fulfill God's purpose with his wealth.

Scripture: (Matthew 6:33) (John 6:27) (Luke 16:13)

Engage: Looking at this story, how does God make it possible for a rich man to get into heaven?

What is it about wealth that causes a person to forsake God?

How does disappointment conspire against a sense of purpose in life?

One of the most ironic realities is that often those who seem to have it all are the most disappointed. As Dr. Zacharias notes, "Disappointment is not only for those who have thwarted goals, disappointment comes to those who have reached their goals."

- The only way to properly celebrate these kinds of achievements is to have a sense of ultimate purpose that every good and perfect gift comes from God.

Engage: The scripture states in John 15:5 apart from God you can do nothing, why?

How is happiness related to meaning and purpose?

Dr. Zacharias supplies us with a key concept: happiness is a by-product and not an end in and of itself.

- The Beatitudes say, "Blessed are those," (Matthew 5) the common word would be happy, but note it adds the word "If."
- With God we see the by-product of walking where he walks, in truth.

Scriptures: (John 15:11) (1 John 1:4) (Nehemiah 8:10) (1 John 1:7)

Engage: What would you say is the difference between happiness and joy?

Do all religions view purpose the same way?

Dr. Zacharias does not hesitate to say that other religions are "diametrically" different in ways they view purpose.

- A strict pantheist believes every birth is a rebirth – Muslims believe that purpose is found when one's good deeds outweigh one's bad deeds, but how does one know if one is ever good enough?

- Christians believe that “ultimate expression of what brings happiness is communion with God.”

Scripture: (1 Corinthians 8:6)

Engage: Religions have different goals and different destinies, what is the goal of Christianity?

Further Study:

1. The Grand Weaver: How God Shapes Us Through the Events of Our Lives, **Ravi Zacharias**
2. The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life, **Os Guinness**