

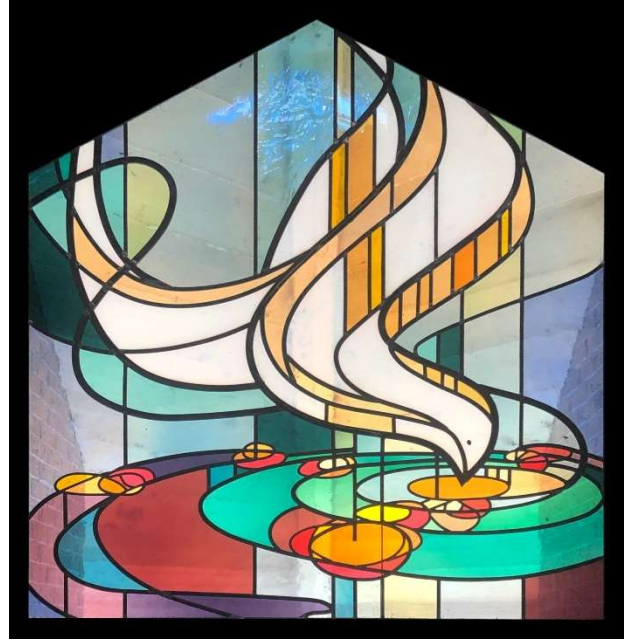
The Purpose of Life

Having begun with Christmas as our anchor point for understanding God's breakthrough to us, and the new way of dealing with us, we may now benefit from moving back even farther into the past—to creation itself

Without dealing with the how of creation, leaving that to the scientists, let us assume that we can know something about the *who* and why of creation. Our faith points us to the *who*. We believe that God created the universe. That is, God is behind everything that exists and continues to sustain it.

Perhaps we are not so clear as to why God bothered to do this, making us the beneficiaries of this bountiful gift, and the caretakers of the earth and all that is in it. Of course, the role of caretaker does not fulfill the purpose of our own existence. Therefore, it is legitimate to ask: "Why are we here?" If indeed there was design and purpose in creation, what is our purpose in being here? Why would God create human beings? Are we here by accident? Are we here merely for our own well-being, or is there some deeper and more personal reason on God's part?

It helps to take a look at human parenting. Why do people reproduce off spring? Along the way we learn that we do so for the continuation of the human race, and that we have our children to teach, train and love only to turn them loose. But why do we do it in the first place? It is for the satisfaction of having a child to love, engage and enjoy? It is a pleasure to relate to and interact with our off spring, and to be involved in their development.



It is the same with God. We are created to bring joy and satisfaction to God. God put us here to love, engage and enjoy us. In turn, our greatest joy comes from providing this joy for God. It behooves us, therefore, to grow beyond the recalcitrant teenage mentality of always challenging God with our attitudes and behavior.

We are in a reciprocal relationship with God. For this to work, as in any relationship, we must trust our partner to be fully present to us, and we must become fully present to that person in return. The instant we switch over and begin to use our partner to benefit ourselves, the relationship loses its moorings and purpose, and unless corrected, will disintegrate. The same is true with our relationship with God. The relationship that God has initiated with us deteriorates if we use it primarily to serve our own desires. God does not exist for us. Rather, we exist for God. God existed as God long before and apart from our coming on the scene. It is just our great fortune that God has chosen to include us in the creation as creatures to enjoy.

That leads us to how we can best carry out this role for which we have been created, and to which we are called. How do we make God happy? Again take a look at human relationships. What makes us happy? Closeness, being connected and good communications are essential qualities that lead to happiness. Whenever we feel close and connected to another person and feel the other person has similar feelings, we are most satisfied and fulfilled. If we are able to communicate openly and freely it nourishes the relationship. The same is true with God. Closeness, being connected and good communications are the necessary ingredients of a meaningful spiritual journey.

Spirituality is about our relationship with God— Person-to-person—Spirit-to-spirit It is not about what we believe or don't believe—that is theology. It is not about what we do or do not do—that is religion. Spirituality is our unique connection with the Holy One.

Spirituality is about whom we love and adore in spite of all of our doubts and craziness. It is about to whom we commit our lives, and the joy we bring to our creator by making this commitment. By differentiating the phenomenon of spirituality from other related phenomena, namely religion

and theology, we are openly suggesting that spirituality is at the heart and core of our relationship with God. It is a different track than many devout religious people travel. Thus, the spiritual journey is a matter of living in a different dimension, while remaining thoroughly engaged in the routine of daily living.

