

A leaflet written by a Christian graduate with the help of some friends . . . for those who want to know what Christians believe about the purpose of life, root problems and radical solutions.

# Investigating Christian Belief

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## **3. MAN**

Then God said "let us make

# Man

in our image . . . "

"For man is not just a chance configuration of atoms in the slipstream of meaningless chance history. No. Man made in the image of God has a purpose — to be in relationship to the God who is there."

Francis Schaeffer<sup>1</sup>

Who am I? Where am I going? Is there a purpose and meaning for my life? And if there is a God of love, why do I not experience Him and see His love more evident in the world?

## A real purpose for life

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them, and said to them 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth' . . . And it was so. And God saw everything that He had made and behold, it was very good."

Genesis 1:27–31

**1** According to Acts 17:26–27 why did God make man?

This truth is expressed in the short but profound statement of the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

*"Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."<sup>2</sup>*

2

What is God's ultimate purpose for men and women?  
Revelation 21:3–4

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full,"  
Jesus Christ<sup>3</sup>

3

What does God ask of us as our highest duties in life?  
Matthew 22:35–40

- In the light of this, what in God's eyes are the greatest wrongs?

4

How do the above statements from the Bible compare with what you consider to be your purpose for life?

# The purpose rejected

## I. We don't love God

"Whatever else is or is not true, this one thing is certain — man is not what he was meant to be."

G.K. Chesterton<sup>4</sup>

If you have an Old Testament you might want to read Genesis 3:1–13 which tells of man's initial disobedience and rejection of God's purpose for him, which has continued throughout human history. The result for all of us is that left to ourselves we do not think straight about God, we do not by nature love God and we do not choose God's will above all else.

5

The following Bible passage describes what is typical of man's response to God.

"But this command I gave them 'Obey My voice and I will be your God, and you shall be My people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.' But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward . . . I have persistently sent all My servants the prophets to them, day after day; yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck."

Jeremiah 7:23–26

- According to this passage, what was God's intention?
- What have people done?
- How has God responded to their turning from Him?
- What has been the result?

“ . . . and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”

Genesis 3:8–9

## 6

How do you think people hide from God today?

“Alone, alone about the dreadful wood  
Of conscious evil runs a lost mankind  
Dreading to find its Father . . .”

W.H. Auden<sup>5</sup>

## 7

Read Romans 1:18–32.

- How does Paul describe man’s behaviour toward God?  
(see especially verses 21, 25, 28)
  
- What is the result?

The Bible clearly states that man’s rejection of God is motivated by moral rather than philosophical or scientific issues. This is illustrated by the following statement of Aldous Huxley:

“I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics; he is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do, or why his friends should not seize political power and govern in the way that they find most advantageous to themselves . . . For myself, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation, sexual and political.”

Aldous Huxley<sup>6</sup>

# The purpose rejected

## II. We don't love one another.

8

How does God tell us to behave toward one another? Colossians 3:12–14 (Try to express the thoughts in your own words – this will help you to think about what is meant.)

9

In contrast to this, how do men tend to behave toward one another in practice? Romans 1:29–31 (again try to express it in your own words.)

(If you are in any doubt about this, take a careful look at today's newspaper.)

- What is your response to the statement of Romans 2:1?

"A promise is not enough; we need a contract. Doors are not enough, we have to lock and bolt them. The payment of fares is not enough, tickets have to be issued, inspected and collected. Law and order are not enough, we need police to enforce them. All this is due to man's sin. We cannot trust each other. We need protection against one another."

John Stott<sup>7</sup>

10

It is the contention of many that the evils of society will disappear as the result of social and political reforms. Though these are needed, are they really at the root of the problem? Consider James 4:1–2 and Mark 7:21–23: where does the problem originate?

"Some say 'I have my faults, but at the bottom, I have a good heart'. Alas! It is this that deceives you, for your heart is the worst part of you."

C.H. Spurgeon

# Sin and its consequences

**11** How would you define sin?

"What then is the sin that we have committed against the Lord our God? . . . 'Every one of you follows his stubborn evil will, refusing to listen to Me.'"

Jeremiah 16:10,12

**12** Who is affected by sin? Romans 3:23

"Sin is not harmful because it is forbidden, but forbidden because it is harmful."

Benjamin Franklin

**13** What are some of the consequences of sin?

- John 8:34
- Ephesians 4:18, 19
- Hebrews 3:13
- James 1:14, 15

"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."

Proverbs 14:12

**14** How will God eventually deal with sin? Revelation 20:11–15 and Matthew 13:40–42

For God to tolerate sin would mean that God would cease to be God and heaven would become hell.

# Is there any way out ?

**15** Read Luke 18:9–14. What attitude will not help us?

- To what must we appeal?

**16** Read John 3:16–21. How does God demonstrate His love and mercy?

- How may we benefit?
- What is the result of rejecting God's offer?

A man is lost not just because he has sinned, but because he has rejected God's remedy for sin, Jesus Christ.

"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so turn, and live."

Ezekiel 18:32

## FURTHER READING

Michael Green, *Runaway World*.

## REFERENCES

Used by permission.

- 1 Dr. Francis Schaeffer, *Death in the City*, pg. 16, IVP.
- 2 Question 1 of The Westminster Shorter Catechism (and see I Corinthians 10:31; Romans 11:36; Psalms 73:25–28)
- 3 John 10:10, *The New International Version of the New Testament*. Hodder and Stoughton.
- 4 G.K. Chesterton, quoted from *Right with God*, pg. 22, John Blanchard. Banner of Truth Trust.
- 5 W.H. Auden, from his poem "For the Time Being". Quoted from *Penquin Dictionary of Quotations*. Faber & Faber.
- 6 Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, pg. 270, quoted from *Runaway World*, IVP.
- 7 John R.W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*, pg. 62, IVP.
- 8 Ezekiel 18:32, Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright and reproduced by permission. Oxford University Press.

All Bible quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise stated.

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