



## Getting Started

1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: 2 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." 3 What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun? 4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. 5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. 6 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. 7 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. 8 All things are wearisome, more than one can say.

(Ecclesiastes 1:1-8a, NIV)

*The book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible reads like something that accidentally got included. The author's response to the apparent chaos is cynicism, hopelessness, and fatalism. These feelings are relatable, even if only temporarily. This highlights the difficulty of pursuing your purpose in an unpredictable world.*

*"I can't get no satisfaction."  
The Rolling Stones*

*"The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why."  
Mark Twain*

*"When I wake up in the morning, I can't decide whether to enjoy the world or improve the world; that makes it difficult to plan the day."  
E.B. White*

### ● Choose one

Do you think that you have lived Mark Twain's "second most important day in your life" yet? If so, what was it?

Who is someone in history you admire because of the life they lived and why?

If the writer of Ecclesiastes was right, what is the purpose of life if we just keep repeating the same cycle?

Enjoying the world or improving it: Which do you tend to choose and why?



## The Good Samaritan

**25** On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

**26** "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

**27** He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

**28** "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

**29** But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

**During his ministry, Jesus was regularly in debates. This one started with a question about what really matters.**

**And the person Jesus used as the hero? A Samaritan, a member of an ethnic group that the listeners hated.**

### Choose one

**If you were in need of a Good Samaritan, whose help would you find it difficult to accept?**

**When have you stopped to help despite the costs?**

**30** In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. **31** A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. **32** So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. **34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

**36** "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

**37** The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

**(Luke 10: 25-37, NIV)**



## Going Deeper

*"The assumption of spirituality is that God is always doing something before I know it. So the task is not to get God to do something I think needs to be done, but to become aware of what God is doing so I can respond to it and participate and take delight in it."\**

**Eugene Peterson**

Translator of *The Message*

### Choose one

In your life, what plan, if any, does it feel like you are discovering, responding to and taking delight in?

If you were to name a guiding principle(s) in your life, what would it be?

What is a core value you hold and how did you come to it?

\* Rodney Clapp, "Eugene Peterson: A Monk Out of Habit," Christianity Today, April 3, 1987, 25

## The Journey Ahead

Life is full of choices. We are always at a crossroads. What crossroads are you at today in work, family, life?

National Public Radio had a series called This I Believe.\* Write out a page of what you believe.

Experiment. Start the morning by asking, what is vying for your attention today?

## To Learn More



*Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl [A Holocaust survivor and psychologist, Frankl explores how purpose is central to human flourishing.]

*Every Good Endeavor* by Timothy Keller [A Christian perspective on the purpose and meaning of life.]

*The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here for?* by Rick Warren [A Christian perspective on the purpose and meaning of life.]

*Three Philosophies of Life* by Peter Kreeft [A Christian philosopher's reflection on Ecclesiastes, Job, and Song of Songs as three ways to approach life.]



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