

Real Life: Opinions on What It is and Where to Find It

Three people share where they found fulfillment, acceptance, and purpose in real life.

Various Authors

Have you ever felt there must be something more? Something beyond merely existing? The following are some straightforward accounts that offer opinions about real life and God's role in it.



Fulfillment in real life (by John G.)

Maybe you've heard about the guy whose life goal was to climb a certain mountain. When he finally reached the top, he was terribly disappointed. There was nowhere else for him to go, and something was still missing in his life. It's like the rugby player who gets depressed after winning the Grand Final.

My Uni experience was a lot like that. By my senior year, I'd achieved everything that people were telling me would make me fulfilled--being in a fraternity and other campus clubs, having lots of fun partying, making decent grades, and spending time with girls I was really attracted to.

Everything that I wanted to do and achieve while in Uni came to pass. And yet, when I got to the "top of the mountain," I was still unfulfilled. Something was still missing, and I had nowhere else to go.

Of course, no one knew I was feeling this way about life--on the outside I didn't show it. Ironically, I sensed that many of the guys in my fraternity looked up to me. Maybe they wished their lives were more like mine. They didn't know how unfulfilled I felt.

There was, however, another group of guys in our residential college. I called them "Bible-bashers." Even though I made fun of them and was always looking for reasons to condemn them, there was something about them I couldn't get over - they didn't seem to be missing anything. They seemed to have that real fulfillment I was looking for. They seemed to know the meaning of life.

The summer after my last year in at Uni I was invited to a Bible study at a church. For some reason I went. I guess I was feeling more open to spiritual things than usual. When the guy started teaching from the Bible, I was astounded. "Hey, that stuff's right on target..." I was surprised by how true the Bible was and how relevant it seemed to my life.

It was as if God was knocking on the door of my heart...but I still didn't want to let him in. I kept thinking about how my life would change and how my friends would think I was weird. I was scared. But the more I thought about it, the more God helped me to realise that entering into a relationship with him was the right thing to do. So I told him that I sincerely wanted him to come into my life.

What happened next is difficult to describe. I can only put it this way: I "met" God. And when I met him I discovered real fulfillment. I felt a wholeness I had never experienced before, as if an empty part of me deep down in my soul had been filled-- a wholeness that has been a part of my life ever since that day.

What I found out is that my experience was not unique. It's what Jesus Christ offers to do in anyone's life. He said (and still says), "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."¹ Jesus offers us a relationship with himself.

Life still has its ups and downs, its disappointments, and struggles. But what gives my life meaning and makes it so satisfying is the real fulfillment I've experienced in knowing Jesus Christ.

Acceptance in real life (by Robert C.)

When I was growing up, there was a movie that everyone loved to watch whenever it came on TV. Everyone knew the words to the songs, and loved the unique characters in it. I'm talking about The Wizard of Oz.

Maybe you remember the story. Dorothy leaves Kansas and crash-lands in Oz, where she conveniently kills the wicked witch and thus becomes an instant celebrity. All this homage and goodwill from the Oz residents, however, fail to fill her aching need: the desire to be home. But, fortunately, even that wish can be granted in this land of dreams. All Dorothy needs is a trip to see the Wizard...the wonderful Wizard of Oz. So, before she knows it, she's on a journey with three new companions in tow, growing in joyful expectation of meeting this great figure.

Remember what happens next? Instead of a kind and caring wizard, Dorothy and her friends are greeted by an angry, short-tempered warlock who's interested only in getting rid of them. After they present their requests, he booms, "Before I grant your wishes, first you must prove yourselves worthy." Then he gives them a near-impossible task for proving themselves: obtaining the wicked witch's broom (the wicked witch who is the sister of the witch Dorothy already killed).

So much for the wonderful Wizard of Oz.

Much to the Wizard's surprise, they return with the broom. Unimpressed, the Wizard continues to try to get rid of them. But while they plead their case, something very interesting happens. Toto (Dorothy's dog), smelling something funny in the angry Wizard's smoke, finds a curtain in the corner of the room. Toto pulls back the curtain to reveal a kind, old man who is nothing like the Wizard.

When I was growing up, God, to me, was a lot like the Wizard of Oz. I thought he was mean and short-tempered and that he actually knew very little about me. The few images I saw of him in church as a child made him seem distant, other-worldly, unreachable. His death on the cross--a constant image--I understood as a great sacrifice, but one he seemed to do reluctantly. What really counted with him, I thought, was how well I behaved, and how well I lived up to his standards. If I was ever going to be accepted by him, I needed first to prove myself worthy. As you can imagine, God was not a great figure in my life. Wonderful was not a word I used to describe him.

Then, in my first year of Uni, all this changed. The curtain was pulled back. For the first time in my life, someone showed me in the Bible--a book I'd always thought was full of a lot of smoke--who God really was. He was not angry or mean--just the opposite. He was loving and compassionate. He knew I was incapable of living a perfect life and of ever keeping his standards. So, out of his great love, he became that perfect human being and met those standards for me.

Jesus Christ, I learned, was not my example, he was my substitute. I wasn't supposed to imitate his suffering, but to take advantage of it. In his death on the cross--which I discovered he did willingly--my sin and my failures were judged. On the cross God demonstrated his great love for me. It was there he showed me how well he did know me. It was there he accepted me. As the Bible says, "God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."²

Real acceptance, I discovered, lies in the someone new behind the curtain. I challenge you to pull it back and discover him for yourself, and to consider his offer of acceptance and forgiveness.

Purpose in real life (by Marilyn A.)

I have always thought that life should be meaningful. Not necessarily every moment of every day. I mean, how meaningful is it doing laundry? Nor should life always be serious. We all need extremely large doses of just having a good time!

But life has to be more than pleasure-seeking, partly because the enjoyment doesn't last. It's here for a moment, then gone. The author Ravi Zacharias said it well: "If there is no larger meaning to life...then life is without a driving force, without overall substance or explanation."

For several years I studied the philosophies of Dostoyevsky, Sartre, Nietzsche, Socrates and many others--looking for an overriding, motivating purpose to my life. Every few weeks I would "try out" a new philosophy to see if it could work. But I found these philosophies disappointing when applied to actual life situations. My search continued.

An international news correspondent for TIME Magazine, Dr. David Aikman, shed some light on this subject. He has a couple of post-graduate degrees, is an expert in

Russian and Chinese history and communist affairs, has worked in more than 30 countries, is fluent in six languages, and is a serious thinker about life issues. He said, "Each of us has a purpose, a reason for being here, that no one else can tell you, but you can find out from God." Dr. Aikman recommended beginning a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Dr. Aikman gave this account, "When I heard the words of Jesus [in the Bible], it seemed to me he was speaking to my heart, and he was saying, 'I am the way to life. If you follow me and do what I say, your life will change.'" He then talked about taking the first step to starting a relationship with Jesus Christ, by asking him to enter his life. Dr. Aikman concluded, "I can promise you...anybody that takes that first step toward Jesus Christ will have a very exciting life."

Like Dr. Aikman, I came from an atheistic background. And like him, I found that Jesus' statements about himself were quite unique. Jesus didn't point people to his philosophy on life, he pointed people to himself. Jesus said he could forgive our sins, give us inner peace in the midst of tough circumstances, and guide us to a life of freedom.

I determined that if there really was a God, I wanted to know him. But I was still skeptical. I debated and challenged the Christians I knew. I wanted proof that Jesus was God. One day I took an honest look at the evidence for God's existence and Jesus' deity, and I was shocked to find so many logical, historical facts. I then knew I had a decision to make. Was I going to ask him to enter my life and influence it in whatever way he wanted, or was I going to close the chapter on this part of my life and refuse to consider the possibility of "God" ever again?

After reviewing the concrete, intellectual reasons to believe in Jesus, I asked Jesus if he would come into my life. And that very day my search for the meaning of life was completely resolved.

It amazed me that I could have a relationship with God. I talked to him and, through changes in circumstances, he indicated that he heard me. He led me in career paths that are far more expansive and exciting than I ever dreamed. And I asked him questions and he guided me to appropriate, helpful answers in the Bible.

These things didn't occur just on one obscure, stormy day. It was a genuine two-way relationship with God that I was enjoying on a consistent basis, and still do. It wasn't because I became a saint, but because Jesus Christ will enter anyone's life who truly wants to know him and follow him.

There is a deep joy that comes in following God. Unlike anything or anyone else, knowing Jesus Christ has brought real purpose to my life.

In real life...

Real life is a life filled with fulfillment, acceptance and purpose. We find it in a relationship with Jesus Christ. No one in human history has made the claims Jesus

made and given such great proofs to back them up. He claimed to be God, to be able to forgive sins, and to be the only way through which we can know God the Father. Jesus backed up those claims through his resurrection from the dead. He is, truly, the most unique person who ever lived...much more than a great teacher.

The Bible says that Jesus was God who became man-- "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."³ He was "the exact representation of his [God's] being."⁴ In short, Jesus Christ revealed exactly what God is like. So how do we begin a relationship with him?

We don't begin a relationship with God by trying to be a better person. Trying harder to win God's approval is not the way he wants us to live. Have you ever been in a relationship with someone in which you had to try to win that person's approval? It's no fun.

God has such a genuine love for us that he himself provided the way for us to get close to him...but there is a problem. Currently, what stands in the way of us connecting with God is our sin (our self-centeredness shown by our anger, our hurtful words, our impatience, our selfishness, greed, etc.). If you've ever wondered why your prayers seem to go nowhere, that is why. Our sin has separated us from God, who is holy.

So what has God done so we can have a close relationship with him? Jesus Christ ("God in the flesh") took all of our sin on his shoulders while he willingly died on a cross. He did this so we could be completely forgiven, completely acceptable to him.

Our problem is illustrated by the college student who is charged with a crime. The judge sentences her to 30 days in jail or a \$1,000 fine. The student can afford neither the time nor the money. The judge, knowing this, takes off his robes, walks to the front of the bench, and with his own checkbook pays the fine. Why? Because, as a just judge, he cannot overlook the offense. But, because he is the student's father, he chooses to pay the penalty on her behalf.

This is exactly what Jesus did for each of us on the cross. He made the great sacrifice of being beaten, humiliated, whipped and crucified on our behalf. He now asks us to respond to his sacrifice by inviting him into our lives.

How we can be in real life

He wants us to know him and to experience his love, joy and peace. When we ask him into our lives, we receive his forgiveness, and we begin a relationship with him that's meant to last forever. Jesus said, "I stand at the door (of your heart) and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him (or her)."⁵

If this is now the desire of your heart, the following is a suggested prayer (but the words aren't as important as the attitude of your heart):

Dear God, I confess that I have sinned against you. Thank you for taking all of my sin upon yourself on the cross. I want to receive your forgiveness. I want to enter into a relationship with you. I ask you to come into my life as my Savior and Lord. Please give me the real life that comes only from you.

For more on the meaning of life, please see [The Source of a Changed Life](#) or other articles on this site.

From the Bible...

"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:12)

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3)

1. John 6:35
2. 2 Corinthians 5:21
3. John 1:14
4. Hebrews 1:3
5. Revelation 3:20

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