

- Speaker 1: [00:22](#) Hello and welcome to this episode of St Andrew's Enfield podcast with me, Steve Griffiths. In this episode, we're going to be thinking about an issue that's at the very heart, I think, of what it means to be human. Um, it's a question I'm sure that we have all asked ourselves at one time or another. And the question really is this, "What is the meaning of life?" "Why are we here at all?" "What's the, what's the point of it all?" And it's a really important thing to think about because if we know what the purpose of life is, if we know what the meaning of life is, then we can adapt the way we actually live day by day so that we can maximize our time here on earth and fulfill our potential, fulfill our destiny. Now, those of us who are old enough to remember the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy already know the answer, of course. The answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe and everything is 42.
- Speaker 1: [01:25](#) Yes. Douglas Adams gave us the answer in his 1978 radio show and that then became a book and a TV series in 1981 and a computer game and then a feature film in 2005. The answer to the meaning of life is 42. And bizarrely there's now a whole scientific industry about why the answer is 42. Honestly, it's true. You just check it out online for yourself. And there are three key reasons why this scientific group of believers believe that the answer to the meaning of life is 42. I'm a nonscientific person myself. I don't understand any of these things. But this is what I've read anyway. That the number 42 in binary code is one zero, one zero, one zero. Secondly that light refracts through water at 42 degrees to create a rainbow. And thirdly, that light requires 10 to the power of minus 42 seconds to cross the diameter of a proton.
- Speaker 1: [02:25](#) So clearly for this group of people, the answer 42 is at the heart of the created order and therefore must be the answer to which we are all searching. But in 1993, Douglas Adams, who was the author of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, gave an interview in which he told us why he chose the number 42. And this is what he said, he said, "The answer to this is very simple. It was a joke. It had to be an ordinary smallish number. And I chose that one. I sat at my desk, stared the garden, and thought, '42 will do'. I typed it out. End of story."
- Speaker 1: [03:19](#) OK then, maybe 42, isn't the meaning of life and the answer to everything after all. Perhaps we need to look somewhere else. And where better to look than the Bible and the creation story in Genesis chapter one. But before we get into the passage itself, I just want to make one observation about Genesis chapter one, which is that, uh, the trap that so many of us fall into when we read this is trying to work out whether it's a, a

literal account of creation or whether it's just a story. Did God really create the world in six days? And if so, does that mean that we can't believe in evolution? Well, my opinion for what it's worth, is that it really doesn't matter. If you want to believe that God created the world in six days, then that's absolutely fine. If you want to believe that it evolved over billions of years, then that's fine too.

Speaker 1: [04:17](#) Because the purpose of Genesis chapter one and chapter two is not really to present a scientific account of creation. It was written with a very different purpose in mind. Genesis chapter one was probably written in the sixth century BC when the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon. And, uh, there was a Babylonian myth about how their gods had created the world that was in the form of a poem. And so Genesis one was written as a sort of counterclaim: "You Babylonians think that your god created the world, but actually our God created the world." Genesis one is written in the style of a poem that matches the claims of the Babylonian myth. So it's a sort of, my God is better than your god poem. Now, that's not to say that God didn't create the world in six days. Maybe he did. But the purpose of Genesis one is not actually to tell us scientific fact.

Speaker 1: [05:16](#) Instead, it's a claim to the greatness of our God above all other gods. So we don't really need to worry about whether or not this is a literal account. And likewise, with the creation of human beings, Genesis one and two isn't concerned so much, perhaps with a literal account of how it actually happened so much as trying to tell us a theological truths about who we are. And if we want to discover the meaning of life, the purpose of our lives, then it's exactly this that we need to focus on. And as we think about this passage to discover the meaning of life, there's three things that I want to draw from it.

Speaker 1: [06:11](#) The first is this, that we can only find meaning in life in relation to God. You and I can only find true meaning in life if we know who we are in relation to God, because that is the very foundation stone of our createdness. Verse Twenty Six of Chapter One says this, "then God said, let us make humankind in our image." So you and I have been created in the image of God. And as each day passes and we grow deeper into a relationship with God, so, so the image of God within us become stronger and clearer. The more we rely on God in our lives, the more we allow him to direct our lives, uh, so the greater is his image reflected in us through our love and our kindness, our compassion shown towards others. What journey are you on in life? Well, in one sense you might want to

measure that in terms of your career or getting better at a hobby or earning more money or whatever.

- Speaker 1: [07:24](#) But the journey that you and I are really on, at its most profound and important level, is a journey into the image of God. And we only find our true meaning when we uncover, uh, how it was that we were destined to live. We need to continually seek to love others. We need to continually seek to forgive others. We need to continually seek to show compassion to others. And as we do that, we are living out the image of God within us because that is exactly what God has done for you. He loves you. He has forgiven you. He shows compassion on you. And we want to mirror that in our own lives because that was the purpose for which we were created. "Let us make humankind in our own image." Well, what does that mean then on a practical, everyday level? Well, I suppose it boils down to what motivates us, what drives us in life.
- Speaker 1: [08:35](#) The temptation for all of us, I think is to, uh, seek our identity, our meaning, our purpose in the things that will eventually pass away, the things that are only temporary; our jobs, our financial security, our relationships, our health. Now these things are important, of course they are, but they can never give us, um, lasting peace because they are only temporary and they will end when we retire or when we get unwell or when we die. So if we build our sense of self identity on these things, we will be like the builder in Jesus' parable who builds his house on the sand that gets blown away in the storm. Instead, we need to journey into a deeper awareness of where our identity is truly to be found, which is in our relationship with God and how that gets mirrored and worked out in how we treat others.
- Speaker 1: [09:40](#) So that is the work of your life and mine. That journey is our purpose for living; to become the people that we were destined to be. So we find meaning in life, in relation to God because it is only that relationship, you and God, me and God, that is eternal. It's only that relationship between us and God that provides a lasting purpose and value in life. So you know, by all means, pursue a job, uh, pursue financial security, good health and the rest of it. But don't fall into the trap of believing that these things can provide lasting happiness because they can't. Only God can provide eternal happiness
- Speaker 2: [10:25](#) and a deep sense of fulfillment. Say, let's make sure that we get our priorities right in how we choose to live.
- Speaker 1: [10:42](#) And secondly, we find meaning in life, in relation to the rest of creation. God made us in his own image and then he

immediately placed us into a relationship with the rest of the created order. In Verse Twenty Six again from Genesis chapter one, God says this, he says, "Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." Now we can come at this verse from dozens of different angles, but I just want to make one simple observation in this podcast, which is that we have to find our meaning in relation to the rest of the created order. If I do not, if I don't locate myself within the created order, I will only be able to live my life in reference to myself, as if I truly am the center of the universe.

- Speaker 1: [11:53](#) If I don't locate myself in relationship with everything else that is created, then my ego will become inflated and I will think that every decision I make, every action I perform, should revolve around me. And furthermore, I will expect the people around me to treat me as if I were the center of the universe. But I am not the center of the universe. I'm just one small part of an extraordinary network that incorporates galaxies near and far, billions of people, and the history of a cosmos that stretches back to the dawn of time. And all the while I allow my ego to inflate my position within the created order, I can't find true meaning in life because I'll be living an egotistical life. So each one of us, if we, if we want to find meaning in life, if we want to discover our true purpose in life, we've got to do that in relation to God first and in relation to the created order second. If we don't do that, we will become egotistical and selfish. We'll put ourselves at the center of everything whereas our true purpose in life really means living a selfless life, not a selfish one. That's why Jesus said "the first shall be last and the last shall be first." That's why Jesus said, "if you want to live, you must die." We need to die to an inflated sense of self. We need to die to ego. It really is
- Speaker 2: [13:37](#) not all about you. It really is not all about me. It really is all about God and we need to find our place in relation to him and his created order.
- Speaker 1: [13:59](#) Thirdly, I would suggest that we find meaning in life through our worship. We asked the question at the beginning, "why were we created?" "What is our purpose?" Well actually, the answer is remarkably simple. We were created in order to worship God. Full stop. What is the meaning of life? To worship God. What is your purpose in life? To worship God. Where will you find lasting fulfillment? In your worship of God. It's a stark but quite brutal truth that if worshipping God is not the absolute center of your life, then you will never find ultimate fulfillment. If the

worship of God is not what gets you out of bed in the morning, if the worship of God is not what motivates you more than anything else, then you will never find lasting peace and happiness. It may sound harsh, but I think it's true. It's what we were created for. And how do we know this?

Speaker 1: [15:10](#)

But if you look through Genesis chapter one and what happens when God creates each day, um, look at how the day ends. Verse Five, it says, "and there was evening and there was morning the first day". Verse seven, "there was evening and there was morning the second day". Verse 13, "there was evening, there was morning, the third day", and so on. God completes each day and he draws it to a close. And then on day six, he creates humanity. He creates you and me in readiness for day seven. But when we go to verse three of Chapter Two, it says this, "so God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it because on it, God rested from all the work that he had done in creation." God makes day seven. He makes it a holy day. But he doesn't end it. There is no, "and then there was evening and there was morning the seventh day."

Speaker 1: [16:13](#)

And this means that the seventh day is still happening. The whole of the history of time, except for the first six days, is the seventh day. We are still living in the seventh day and we will continue to live in the seventh day until the end of time. Now, why is that important? Well, it's important because God created humanity. He created you and me on the sixth day specifically so that we could enjoy an eternal seventh day, which is us, resting with God and God resting with us; just enjoying each other's company and bathing in one another's love. You are living in an eternal seventh day in which the whole purpose of you being in it is to enjoy God, enjoy being in his presence, Enjoy the fact that God is loving you and resting with you. So what is the ultimate meaning of life? Well, we know it's not 42.

Speaker 1: [17:29](#)

The ultimate meaning of life, your purpose in life, what you were created for, is to enjoy an eternity at rest with God; worshiping him and adoring him. Yes, we find meaning in our jobs or hobbies or relationships with other people, but these are temporary and they will soon pass away. What lasts forever is the seventh day rest with God. What lasts forever is us worshiping and adoring God in his presence. The worship and the adoration of God is the only place that you and I will find ultimate meaning and purpose to life because it was for that that we were created. Now realization of that truth must surely challenge how we live our lives. What is your work in life? It must be to worship God. What is your ultimate pleasure in life?

It must be to worship God. Where will you find ultimate happiness? In your worship of God.

- Speaker 1: [18:45](#) Everything else we do in our daily lives must be worked around, fitted around, our worship of God, which is our true purpose. Now, the problem is that we have such an upside down view of things, we devote ourselves to the everyday things; work, chores, shopping, hobbies and so on. And if we get a few minutes to spare, we might pray to God. But to find meaning in life, we need to turn that worldview on its head; worship God through prayer and praise to loving others and serving others and then fit everything else around it. Is it a difficult thing to do? Of course it is. Because we've become so conditioned to see our lives in one way. That being asked to learn a completely different way of living and understanding our sense of purpose is of course a very tough thing to do. But if we are serious about finding happiness, if we're serious about finding purpose, finding out who we truly are, pursuing our destiny and becoming fulfilled in life, then we absolutely have to reorientate our lives so that the worship of God comes first
- Speaker 2: [20:07](#) and everything else follows on from that is the only foundation for true happiness because it's what you and I were made for.
- Speaker 1: [20:24](#) So I hope this podcast has been helpful for you and given you something to think and to pray about. Um, thank you for listening. Thank you for taking the time to be here with me today. Uh, if you've got any feedback or any comments, then please do feel free to email me steve.griffiths@london.anglican.org. Check out the church website, standrewsenfield.com. Our Facebook page is St. Andrew's Enfield. Please do subscribe to these podcasts and don't forget to share them with other people as well so we can continue to build this learning community together. So whatever you're doing today, wherever you are, I hope you have a wonderful day and I look forward to being with you again in the next podcast. Thanks for your time. Bye.