

Maybe you, too, have a friend like Alan. In his late 60s he discovered that he had a half-sister, Rosemary. She was 70 when she found out. To say they were shocked is an understatement. But they were also delighted because somehow, in a very profound way, it matters to us to know where we came from. It seems hardwired into us.

Rosemary needed her birth certificate for some reason, but couldn't find it. When she applied for a copy, she was surprised to see it recorded a different name from her mum as her mother. She told her brother and sister of the mistake, and to her total shock they said it wasn't a mistake at all. Their parents, now passed away, had told them to never tell her that she was adopted.

Imagine living your whole life without any doubt as to your identity, who you are, who your parents are and where

you came from, only to find out it wasn't true, and that the story was different all along.

Evolution based on random chance is one of the pillars of the way most secular or non-religious people understand the world and their place in it. That is what they have been told, and they have accepted it: we are the result of a cosmic accident and that is just how it is. The trouble is, that leaves us with no hope and nothing but uncertainty to look forward to. It is so bleak that many people are compelled to say that, somehow, everyone goes to 'a better place' when they die.

If the physical world is all there is, and random, undirected chance is the only reason we are here, then what do we face the struggles of life with? Where are purpose, meaning and hope to be found in the face of such cold, uncaring indifference?

To make things worse, many people have typically decided that 'religious' answers are just wishful thinking to help the weak cope with such uncertainty, and are not worth looking into.

We all live our lives within a story about who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. That much seems universal to all people, everywhere, which is remarkable.

Viktor Frankl in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, described the horrors of his time in a concentration camp, watching thousands die in front of his eyes. He noticed that those with no hope and nothing to look forward to were not able to survive. Hope was essential, and it had to be based on something real, not just wishful thinking. Emil Brunner wrote that, as the fate of the human organism is dependent on the supply of oxygen, so the fate of humanity is dependent on its supply of hope.

The secular story of life is a journey of despair that ends in uncertainty.

In contrast, it is possible to find real, meaningful hope. If we know that we are made in the image of God, then each one of us is immensely valuable and our whole perspective changes. This truth provided the bedrock for human rights and the value placed on human dignity in the Western world.

Genesis, the biblical ancient book of origins, declares,

'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27).

Embracing the truth that you are made in the image of God is extremely powerful. There is a lot to discover as you work through its implications. It means that we are aware of the moral dimension of existence. All choices are not equal. Right and wrong are real.

It means recognising that listening attentively to the voice of conscience is essential. It means that we must treat other people as being of equal value to us. They too are made in the image of God, no matter what their background. It means that we yearn for more than this life, as Solomon, a Bronze Age king of Israel, put it: 'He has put eternity into man's heart' (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Losing or suppressing the truth that we are made in the image of God has had devastating consequences. The atheist Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, Russia and China appealed to the supposed greater good of making a Communist utopia. Individuals did not matter. 100 million brutal deaths occurred in the twentieth century as a result. The experiment has been tried, and the verdict is in: it turns out that what story your life is lived within matters immensely.

The limited space here doesn't allow us to address all the concerns you might have, such as, Why does God allow pain and suffering? How do you find your true identity? However, you can find meaningful answers to those questions if you are prepared to look and keep asking.

Jesus of Nazareth promised,

'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.' (Matthew 7:7)

Every journey has to start somewhere, and if you start in the right place, you have a much better chance of finding what you are looking for. If you want meaning in your life, then know that you are made in the image of God.

Are you willing to take that truth as the first step of a journey away from despair to discover hope? Why not then start with the Bible's first page?

Looking for a free Bible?
Look no further.

Scan the QR code below and visit www.freebible.uk

Complete ten online quizzes and you'll get your **free** hard-copy Bible.



Reading the Bible may seem to be an overwhelming challenge. We can help.

The Bible's Teachings is our most comprehensive course on the key teachings of Scripture. You will find hope, meaning and purpose. Enrol now!



www.reflectinghope.org

Powered by AWR.

