

Welcome to the Big Ten! Many of you are thinking of Michigan, Michigan State, Ohio State and the Fighting Illini, right? The Big Ten is a big thing around here, even though these institutions of higher education recognize in their name the fact that there are 11, not 10 schools in the conference. Sometimes the Big Ten is referred to as the top ten, like the top ten movies of all time, or the top ten songs on the music charts. God has his “big ten” too. When we think about God’s big ten, we usually think of the 10 Commandments. (Did you know that between the Eastern and Western Churches we actually have 11 commandments? Maybe that is where the Big Ten conference got their numbering system from.) While the 10 Commandments are important, they only tell us part of the story. The 10 Commandments are the moral laws that we don’t keep, the rules for God’s followers to live by. That is why we need another big ten, not rules but realities that shape our lives.

We begin our series on the Big Ten with the first reality raised by the question, “Why am I alive, why am I here?” It is a question that we all have to answer. It is the question about our value, meaning and direction. To answer this question, we are going to ask three related and important questions.

The first question is this, “Where did I come from?” Parents with young children may have a hard time trying to answer that question for their child when it is first asked by their child. But they may also have a hard time trying to answer that question for themselves. “Where did I come from?” Atheistic evolution says that we are really nothing more than an accident of nature, that we are the result of a long evolutionary line. I find this answer unacceptable for a number of reasons. First of all, I hate to think of myself as someone who came out of some primordial slime or descended from a monkey, although I’ve met some pretty slimy people and some people who like to monkey around a lot. But the real problem with atheistic evolution is that it takes God totally out of the picture. If there is no God, then we have no connection with God. If all life on this earth has evolved, then we’re no more important or valuable than a fly.

Genesis is the book of beginnings. It begins with God and gives us a totally different perspective on life. Genesis tells us that God created. It also tells us that people are special to God, that He set us apart from the rest of creation. Genesis 1:27 (NLT) reads, **“So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”** Genesis 2:7 tells us, **“Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.”** The King James Translations reads “living soul.” Where did we come from? God made us, created us in His image, gave us the breath of life and a living soul. We are not an accident of nature. God made us to love us and so that we could love Him back. We are the crown of God’s creation. Because God made us and wants to be connected with us, our lives have value.

That brings us to the next question, what is my purpose? Our purpose is not just to survive. While survival is important to us, we have a purpose that far exceeds just the “survival of the

fittest.” Surviving alone is not enough because we know that eventually we will all die. Our purpose is not to make a name for ourselves or to put ourselves ahead of others. That doesn’t work. While we might be remembered for a short time, eventually we will be forgotten. If we only work to get ahead in life, we have to face the reality that eventually someone will catch up with us and pass us by, or that someone else will get the benefit of all our hard labor. If our purpose is to enjoy ourselves, we need to realize that may not last long. Remember the story that Jesus told about the very successful farmer, who had a bumper crop and build bigger barns to store it all in. Jesus concluded the story with these words from the foolish farmer, **“I’ll sit back and say to myself, ‘My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!’” “But God said to him, ‘You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?’”** Luke 1:19-20 (NLT)

We aren’t here to just live for ourselves. God made us to be connected with Him and with one another. He didn’t just create one man or one woman, he made both and said to the first people, **“Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it.”** (Genesis 1:28 NLT) He made us to take care of each other and to take care of His world. Genesis 3 tells us that God walked in the garden where Adam and Eve lived. God wanted to be connected with them. The prophet Micah answered the question of purpose with these words, **“The Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”** (6:8 NLT) Because we know about God’s love for us and all people, because we know that God’s love moved Him to come into our world to rescue us, we also have the responsibility of telling others about the God who loves them and gives them life. Walking with God in faith, taking care of one another and pointing others to Christ, gives our lives meaning.

One final question, “Where am I going?” Sometimes we get the feeling that we are going nowhere fast. But that is not true. We all have a final destination. The question is, what is it? Some people think it is the grave, that this life is all there is. If there is no god and we are only an accident of nature, then that might be true. But since God made us in His image and gave us a soul, then we have a final destination. Hebrews 9:27 (NLT) tells us, **“Each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment.”** Romans 6:23 tells us what the options are (NLT). **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”** We either go to heaven or to hell, to eternal life with Christ or to an eternal death away from God and all that is good. Jesus told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them and then return to take them to their new home. We have a destination. God wants to be with us and us with Him. When we walk with God in humble faith, worship Him and honor Him with our lives, rely on His love and forgiveness, then we are headed in the right direction.

The first reality is that we are alive because God gives us life. The life that we have in Christ gives us value, meaning and direction. The next reality is a question about the condition of our world and our own lives. Join us next week as we try to answer the question, “Why is life so messed up?”