

I grew up in a very Christian home with three sisters and two brothers, one of whom was adopted. My parents both loved me and wanted me to grow up to have the same type of relationship with Jesus that they had. My family attended church regularly and as I grew older, I began to become involved myself. The first time that I said that I wanted to let Jesus into my life so that I could go to heaven was when I was around four years old. As a child, I never thought much about what I was being told – that is, I just assumed it to be true.

Since then, especially in my late teen years, I began to have to decide whether I could really believe something that seemed so bizarre from a materialistic point of view. I was a bit skeptical, to say the least, but the realization that there is a God, a creator, who has shown himself to me through the knowledge of right and wrong He has placed within me, the magnificent physical creation he has placed me in, and through His own written words to us (the Bible), which He wrote and assembled by working through ordinary people like me, eventually became my own understanding – not just that of my parents. This realization led to a personal trust in what Jesus did to get me to heaven, and a commitment to serve Him with my life.

This commitment has really given me a purpose that I had always taken for granted – one that didn't mean much to me until I started to contemplate existence without it. For me, life without knowing Jesus personally and thus without desire to serve Him, would be empty. Things might seem important at first, but ultimately my existence would be insignificant and pointless – nothing that I did would ever really matter, since the best I could do would be to benefit the next generation of pointless existences. But that's not the way it is. Jesus tells us through the Bible that He takes interest in my life, that who I become and what I do matter to Him, and that my actions and attitudes will have eternal implications. He has shown me how he wants me to behave, and even though I haven't always behaved that way, He has made a sacrifice to allow me to spend eternity with Him. Out of this comes my purpose in life. It is to do all that I can to please Him, not out of a sense of obligation, but out of thankfulness for what He has done. So now, whenever I have any decision to make I know that my choices have significance. When I look at myself, I can know that I am doing what I was designed to do – love and serve God. When I look toward the future, I know that it is not hopeless – it is full of opportunities that Jesus has given me to serve Him and to become more like Him – to fulfill my purpose in this life before I move on to the next.

Those beliefs have given me a purpose in life. Knowing that God loved me enough to offer me everlasting life with Him as an absolutely free gift is what makes me want to do what He wants me to do, not out of a sense of requirement, but out of a sense of gratitude.

God continues to work in me to remove the wrong attitudes and the bad habits from my life – to make me more like Him. He causes me to recognize those things I am doing that do not please Him, and then gives me the strength to fight those parts of me. He helps me to see that without Him, I am nothing, and that my pride is therefore unfounded. He continues to show me that my arrogant mindset is not an asset, and that such arrogance is completely foolish – I am who I am and I have what I have only because He created me that way – such realizations leave no room for such arrogance. It's not a question of how I compare to others, but a question of how I compare to God, and in all respects, of Him I fall short. Ultimately, Jesus has given me a reason for living. As I ponder what it would be like if I had no purpose in life, no expectation for existence after physical death, I see only hopelessness – a feeling that everything is meaningless and that I may as well not even be. I am thrilled to know that I do have a purpose – my purpose is to love, appreciate, and serve Jesus – the creator – the savior – God.