



THE LITERAL MEANING OF LIFE & HOW TO SUCCEED AT IT

DISCOVER THE TRUE PURPOSE OF YOUR EXISTENCE AND THE PRACTICAL
STEPS TO FULFILL IT

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BOOK DESCRIPTION

Discover the true purpose of your existence and the practical steps to fulfill it in "The Literal Meaning of Life & How To Succeed At It."

Unlock the secrets of life's ultimate purpose and learn how to align yourself with your divine destiny. This book offers a clear, actionable guide to becoming a worthy candidate for God's Divine Council.

In "The Literal Meaning of Life & How To Succeed At It," we explore the profound question of why we are here and how we can achieve our true potential. Drawing on the insights of Dr. Michael Heiser and other respected scholars, this book guides you on a journey to conquer internal obstacles, strengthen your faith, and live righteously. Whether you're seeking spiritual growth or practical wisdom, this book provides the tools you need to fulfill your divine purpose and prepare for a role in God's plan.

What is the meaning of life? "The Literal Meaning of Life & How To Succeed At It" tackles this age-old question with a fresh perspective, blending ancient wisdom with practical guidance. This book reveals that our earthly journey is a preparation for a higher calling—to become worthy candidates in God's plan. Through understanding, faith, morality, and righteous living, we can align ourselves with this divine purpose.

Each chapter is a treasure trove of actionable steps meticulously designed to help you eliminate internal anger, adopt an evidence-based faith, and cultivate the qualities necessary for divine judgment. Drawing on insights from Michael Heiser and other respected scholars and thinkers, this book provides a comprehensive roadmap to spiritual and personal success. You'll learn to navigate life's challenges with a clear sense of purpose and direction, fostering growth and transformation along the way.

Whether you are deeply religious, a seeker of spiritual enlightenment, or simply someone seeking a meaningful path in life, "The Literal Meaning of Life & How To Succeed At It" offers a profound and practical approach to understanding and achieving your ultimate purpose. Embrace this journey and discover how to live a life that truly matters, preparing yourself for the greater responsibilities that awaits.



CHAPTER 1: WELCOME AND GOOD LUCK

Thank you for taking the first step and opening this book, *The Literal Meaning of Life & How to Succeed At It*.

The journey to discovering the meaning of life is both mysterious and complex, yet once you find it, the path becomes clear and simple.

My own journey began about a year and a half ago when I had a life-altering event. Going into that experience, I was one person; coming out of it, I was another, or at least I had a very different worldview. I have spent the past 18 months trying to understand this new perspective.

Initially, I thought I would have to abandon my previous life and all the tools that had made me successful. I believed I needed to embrace faith and what I thought I knew about Christianity. I was apprehensive, but based on my experience, I knew it was necessary. I spent about a year exploring Christianity and discovered that it was not what I had expected. As an outsider, you might have called me an atheist, but perhaps agnostic is a more accurate term, as I didn't put any energy into not believing. Regardless, I emerged from my experience wanting to understand the meaning of life and was given insights that set me on a path of discovery.

At first, the task seemed impossible.

Thousands of brilliant minds (and many maybe not quite up to that bar) over the past 2,000 years have examined this space, developed various theories, and created doctrines within socioeconomic constructs like churches. This scope can be overwhelming, and the language of faith can be nuanced in ways that are not immediately apparent to the outside ear. I learned that there is no single concept of Christianity; rather, there are many different views. It took me forever to find what I was looking for; I wanted something actionable, almost like the Cliff Notes version, because I was coming into this late in life with fresh but analytical eyes. My challenge was to find a way to believe in the Christian worldview, which I knew to be true from my experience, but I had to reconcile with my own understanding.

I've taught many college courses, and I cannot remember a course in which I was not asked, at one point or another, if the topic at hand would be on the test. I even got asked this in one course where there was no final test; it was a final research paper instead. I used to hate that question, but now, when it comes to the meaning of life, it is my sole focus.

I have always had a unique perspective and have been able to see things syntopically. About two decades ago, I was enrolled in a Doctor of Arts program, and one of the first courses involved reading Mortimer J. Adler's *How to Read a Book*, which introduced me to syntopical analysis. This approach, as defined by Adler, consists of reading topics across multiple authors and discovering that these great works are in conversation with each other over time. Topics such as justice, morality, and law are discussed in this way, providing deep insights when approached syntopically.

This method is different from the specialization we see in the modern world today. Specialization often leads to answers that circularly reference back to that specialization. For instance, if you ask a programmer a question, you will get a programming answer; if you ask an accountant, you will get an accounting answer. Our society tends to solve problems by seeking more specialized answers, but this approach can be limiting. My goal with this book is to provide a broader, more integrative perspective on the meaning of life.

THE LITERAL MEANING OF LIFE

Also, please understand that while this book employs philosophy, it does not provide a philosophical answer.

It provides a literal answer.

The meaning of life is knowable and once known, there is a way to be successful with it. Also, once accepted, your life will start making sense, and you will have a foundation and framework for understanding moral actions in a new way.

The first key to understanding the meaning of life is recognizing our purpose. The only worldview that has provided me with a clear purpose is the Christian worldview. Other religions offer plenty of things to do but without a lot of context. Even mainstream Christianity lacks context, but it is there if you seek it. One theme throughout the Bible is that God brings order from chaos. As I explored this idea, I realized that even that view is wrong, yet almost every person I talked to, and I have talked to hundreds about this at this point, repeated it back to me as a foundation of their faith.

But that's not what's going on at all. God, if you read closely, brings *purpose* out of chaos. Purpose is a much higher-order construct than simply order. Once I finally had done enough research to see this type of nuance, I was horrified when I looked back at the way the Christian faith is caricatured from both outside and, unfortunately, inside. I wanted to find actionable viewpoints that I could adopt to help organize my thoughts.

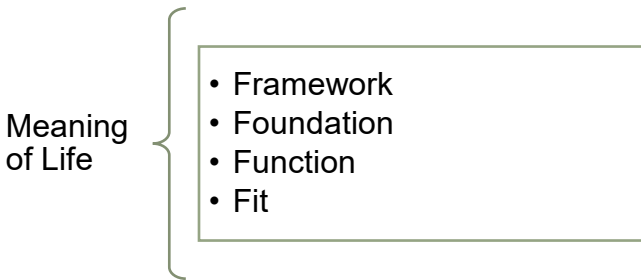
In the end, I needed to believe what I already knew from my experience. It took a lot of work, and I have now sampled quite literally hundreds of viewpoints inside of faith, but I found the three people who seem to have it right, at least partially, from their area of specialization. But to see the whole picture, we must start unwinding specialization, too, even inside of faith. So that's what I am doing here. I found guidance from three key modern-day figures: Michael Heiser, J. Warner Wallace, and Jesse Lee Peterson. Each of these individuals has contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of life.

Michael Heiser passed away on February 20, 2023. I didn't know until I started researching this book, but that day, also, was the date of my event. This was, and remains, difficult for me to understand. I host a weekly radio show called Entry Level Christianity, and through that show, I have been able to talk to both J. Warner Wallace, who has been

a guest on the show twice, and Jesse Lee Peterson, who has been a guest on the show once. I have had the fortune to talk to Rev. Peterson a few times outside of the interview as well. If we assume that Dr. Heiser and I high-fived in passing, then all of what I represent here in this book comes from direct experiences.

THE FOUR-PART MODEL: FRAMEWORK, FOUNDATION, FUNCTION, AND FIT

This book is structured around a four-part model that makes it easy to understand. We'll start with the model and quickly progress to application:



Framework: Michael Heiser

Michael Heiser's Divine Council Worldview presents a detailed structure of the spiritual realm, where a hierarchy of divine beings plays a crucial role in the governance of the realm. This concept, known as the Divine Council, is depicted in various Old Testament passages, such as Psalm 82 and Job 1, where God is seen standing among the "sons of God" and engaging in divine deliberations.

The Divine Council consists of several ranks of spiritual beings, each with distinct roles and responsibilities. At the top is Yahweh, the supreme, uncreated being, who presides over the council. Below Him are the elohim, lesser gods or divine beings who act as His agents. The term "elohim" can refer to different types of spiritual beings, including

angels and archangels. These beings are often tasked with overseeing various aspects of creation and executing divine judgments.

Angels, as messengers of God, occupy a significant place within this hierarchy. They are often depicted as carrying out God's instructions and interacting with humans on His behalf. Archangels, a higher rank among the angels, have more significant roles, often involving leadership over other angels and carrying out critical missions.

Beneath the angels and archangels, there are other spiritual beings, such as the "watchers," mentioned in the Book of Daniel. These beings are believed to observe and report on the activities within the realm. Additionally, cherubim and seraphim, often depicted as guardians of God's throne, hold specific roles within the spiritual hierarchy.

Heiser's worldview also incorporates the idea of spiritual warfare, where these divine beings are involved in an ongoing conflict that influences earthly events and human affairs. This perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of the spiritual and earthly realms, suggesting that human history is deeply intertwined with these spiritual dynamics.

Humans, according to Heiser, have a unique role within this framework. Created in the image of God, humans are seen as part of God's divine family, with the potential to participate in His divine council. This idea is rooted in biblical passages such as Psalm 8, which speaks of humanity's exalted position, just a little lower than the heavenly beings. Heiser suggests that humans are intended to be God's representatives on earth, ruling over creation and participating in His divine governance. This elevates the role of humanity to a position of significant responsibility and purpose within the divine order, highlighting our potential to fulfill God's original intention for us to govern and steward His creation alongside the spiritual beings.

This perspective not only highlights the spiritual hierarchy but also emphasizes the significant role humans play in God's plan. By understanding the Divine Council Worldview, one gains a deeper insight into the nature of God's sovereignty, the spiritual realities described in the Bible, and the profound connection between the spiritual and earthly realms.

Heiser's research draws from ancient Near Eastern texts and cultures, showing parallels with biblical accounts to support the

existence of a divine council. His work is backed by rigorous academic study, engaging with both biblical scholarship and ancient history. This scholarly support lends credibility to his interpretation, challenging traditional views and presenting a coherent and intellectually robust theological framework.

Foundation: J. Warner Wallace

J. Warner Wallace, a former cold-case homicide detective, is renowned for his approach to Christian apologetics, which involves applying investigative techniques to the claims of Christianity. His unique background in law enforcement and expertise in solving cold cases have shaped his method of examining the historical reliability of the New Testament and the life of Jesus.

Wallace's journey to faith began as a skeptic. Raised in a non-Christian household, he approached religious claims with a critical and analytical mindset. However, his life took a pivotal turn when he decided to apply his detective skills to the Gospels. By treating the accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as he would a cold case, Wallace sought to determine whether the evidence supported the truth of Christianity.

One of Wallace's key contributions is his book "Cold-Case Christianity," where he outlines ten principles of cold-case investigations and demonstrates how they can be used to evaluate the Gospels. These principles include assessing eyewitness reliability, examining corroborative evidence, and understanding the chain of custody for historical documents. Wallace argues that the Gospel accounts meet the criteria for reliable eyewitness testimony, providing a compelling case for their historical accuracy.

Wallace also emphasizes the importance of corroborative evidence. He examines external sources, such as writings from early church fathers and non-Christian historians, to support the biblical narrative. By cross-referencing these sources with the Gospel accounts, he builds a cumulative case that reinforces the credibility of the New Testament.

Another significant aspect of Wallace's work is his focus on the chain of custody, which refers to the careful preservation and transmission of evidence over time. He applies this concept to the New Testament manuscripts, exploring how they were copied and passed

down through generations. Wallace argues that the meticulous transmission process strengthens the reliability of the biblical texts we have today.

Wallace's investigative approach also addresses common objections to Christianity. He tackles questions about the existence of God, the problem of evil, and the resurrection of Jesus with the same rigor and logic he applied in his detective work. By presenting evidence and reasoning systematically, he provides answers that are both intellectually satisfying and accessible to a wide audience.

In his book "God's Crime Scene," Wallace expands his investigative approach to the broader question of God's existence. He examines the universe as a "crime scene," looking for evidence of design and purpose. Through this lens, he explores topics such as the origin of the universe, the fine-tuning of physical constants, and the existence of moral values, arguing that the evidence points to a divine creator.

Wallace's work is characterized by a commitment to truth and a passion for helping others see the reasonableness of the Christian faith. He frequently engages in public debates, lectures, and media appearances, sharing his insights and challenging both believers and skeptics to examine the evidence for themselves.

Function: Jesse Lee Peterson

Jesse Lee Peterson, a prominent conservative commentator, author, and pastor, is known for his outspoken views on faith, personal responsibility, and societal issues. His unique perspective on these topics stems from his personal journey and experiences, which have shaped his approach to faith and cultural commentary.

Peterson was born in the rural South and later moved to Los Angeles, where he pursued various jobs and entrepreneurial ventures. However, his life took a significant turn when he experienced a profound spiritual awakening. This led him to embrace Christianity and become a passionate advocate for Christian values.

In his ministry and public life, Peterson emphasizes the importance of returning to traditional Christian values and personal responsibility. He is the founder of BOND (Brotherhood Organization of a New Destiny), a nonprofit organization dedicated to "Rebuilding the Family by Rebuilding the Man." Through BOND, Peterson works to address issues

he believes are plaguing modern society, such as the breakdown of the family, fatherlessness, and moral decline. His focus is on helping men take responsibility for their lives and become strong, moral leaders in their families and communities.

A central theme in Peterson's message is the importance of self-control and managing anger. In his book "From Rage to Responsibility," Peterson shares his personal story of overcoming anger and resentment, which he believes are at the root of many social issues. He describes how his faith in God and commitment to personal responsibility transformed his life, and he encourages others to undergo the same transformation. His message is one of empowerment, urging individuals to look inward and rely on their faith to overcome obstacles and achieve personal success.

Peterson also places a strong emphasis on the concept of "returning to the father." He believes that many societal problems stem from a lack of strong, responsible father figures in the home. According to Peterson, reconnecting with one's earthly father and, ultimately, with God the Father is crucial for personal and societal healing. He advocates for forgiveness and reconciliation within families, encouraging individuals to let go of past hurts and build healthy relationships based on love and respect.

Through his daily radio show and YouTube channel, Peterson discusses current events, interviews guests, and provides his insights on various issues. His direct and often provocative style has garnered a large following and sparked considerable debate. He is unafraid to address contentious topics and challenge popular opinions, always grounding his arguments in his interpretation of Christian principles.

Fit: David Edward

The final part, fit, is my contribution. I'm a little uncomfortable putting myself alongside the above thinkers, but it is accurate, nonetheless, that putting all this together in this way is very much my single contribution. Here, I'll integrate the insights from Heiser, Wallace, and Peterson into a cohesive understanding of the meaning of life and steps necessary to succeed at it. I'll synthesize the actionable steps and practical advice on how to fulfill our purpose and achieve the meaning of life.

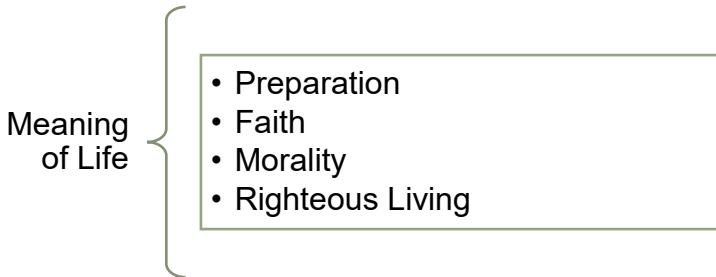
I know I tend to go abstract and meta sometimes but stay with me and work through my weird presentation style, and you will be rewarded with an amazing, life-transforming truth in these pages. In this book, I will first present the answer to the question of the meaning of life and then explain why it is the answer. Traditionally, one might build the case first and show the conclusion at the end, but I believe presenting the answer upfront will help more people see the value of this information. Even if this book is presented perfectly, more people will start it than will finish it, so I want to get the information out there to as many as possible, even at the risk of putting the cart before the horse. To that end, if you find something you don't agree with, note it down and continue reading. I provide a foundation and justification for every element of this worldview after explaining it.

It is also worth noting that I decided not to follow the traditional academic writing style to include references and footnotes. This book is not an academic exercise, and while it is, of course, proper to cite your sources, here I can provide you with my sources without cluttering up the rest of the book. I rely on Heiser for everything to do with the Framework, Wallace for everything to do with the Foundation, Petterson for everything to do with the Function, and my own experiences and insights for everything to do with the Fit. I list all their works in subsequent chapters for each person and I try and list all relevant biblical passages and an explanation for why I interpreted them the way I did. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for you to find the source books and read them if you struggle with my interpretations or want deeper insights than I can provide. I am not trying to repeat their individual works; I am trying to syntopically analyze them into an actionable understanding that will help you and me make the most of this worldly opportunity.

To that end, to reiterate, I am presenting the first half of this book basically backward; we start with the answer and then explain how we got there. If this doesn't work for you, try reading the chapters in this order: 4,5,6,3,2,1. This would probably be a more traditional presentation. There are reasons why we as people are presented with new information in a certain way, but there are also reasons why we as people sometimes need to know the destination before we start the journey. I guess a fun side-effect here is that you are about to find out which category of person you are.

FROM MODEL TO ACTION

We embark on a transformative journey, shifting the meaning of life from an abstract concept to a tangible set of instructions. This journey is about achieving the optimal state of being, aligning with the core pillars of a framework of preparation, foundation of faith, functioning morality, and fitting our lives into a righteous model. These pillars are not just guidelines but the very foundation that makes us worthy candidates for God's Divine Council. Our aim is to inch closer to the optimal state for each of these aspects throughout our lifetime, a journey that promises profound transformation and spiritual fulfillment.



We can start by considering the four key aspects: preparation for our divine role, adopting an evidence-based faith, eliminating internal anger, and living righteously. To achieve this, we continuously adjust our behaviors and thoughts to reduce the gap between where we are and where we need to be.

Firstly, the **Framework** becomes **Preparation**. This is the initial stage where we recognize, understand, and accept our divine purpose. We are preparing ourselves to serve in a significant divine role. This preparation involves developing within us the traits, characteristics, worldviews, and mannerisms that give us the best chance of spiritual success. By recognizing our relationship with God, we lay the groundwork for our spiritual journey.

Secondly, **Foundation** transforms into **Faith**. This stage is about establishing a solid, evidence-based faith. We strengthen our beliefs by continuously reviewing historical evidence and personal experiences that affirm our faith. This ensures our beliefs are grounded in reality and provides a stable base to build upon. By maintaining a strong faith, we ensure that our journey is built on a reliable foundation.

Thirdly, **Function** evolves into **Morality**. Here, we apply our beliefs and values practically. This involves eliminating internal anger through forgiveness and self-reflection, which are crucial for maintaining clarity and emotional balance. By addressing and resolving emotions, we align ourselves with the qualities needed for divine governance. Practicing morality through forgiveness ensures that we clear our minds and hearts, making us more aligned with divine principles.

Lastly, **Fit** translates to **Righteous Living**. This involves integrating all aspects of our journey to live ethically and morally. We ensure that our daily actions reflect our commitment to the divine purpose. Living righteously means aligning our actions with ethical principles and demonstrating our readiness to fulfill our role in the Divine Council. By living righteously, we embody the principles of honesty and integrity, preparing ourselves for divine responsibilities.

To achieve this, we continuously evaluate our progress and make necessary changes to improve. For preparation, this means actively understanding and accepting our role in the Divine Council. For faith, it involves continuously reinforcing our beliefs with evidence and personal experiences. Morality requires us to practice forgiveness and self-reflection, while righteous living involves aligning our actions with ethical principles.

By regularly evaluating our progress, we get closer to embodying these core aspects. This iterative process of self-improvement helps us minimize the distance from the ideal state.

Ultimately, the meaning of life is to become worthy candidates for God's Divine Council. This is not a mere aspiration but a tangible goal that we can strive towards. We do this by adopting an evidence-based faith, eliminating internal anger, and living righteously. Through continuous learning, reflection, and practice, we cultivate the necessary qualities for this divine purpose. This journey involves recognizing our limitations, depending on God's strength, and striving to align ourselves with His will. By doing so, we prepare ourselves for the greater responsibilities that await us in the Divine Council, a goal that gives our lives profound purpose and dedication.

In the following chapters, I'll provide everything you need to understand this, from the steps to take to the amazing alignment of purpose you will achieve and all the supporting details you will need to

know why this is the true meaning of life and how to be successful in your earthly and spiritual endeavors.

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