

The Big Questions

A Reflection on the Common Rule
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At some point in their earthly journey, most people will wrestle with a few of life's bigger questions, such as:

- Where did I come from?
- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- Where am I going?

These particular questions are some of the more important ones that need to be addressed if we are to have a proper foundation in shaping our outlook on life and living together in a world community. In fact, without having good answers to these questions, we tend to lose our grounding as humans. Scholars and prophets down through the years have warned us about the dangers of losing our connections with God. Here's a sample of some of them:

"According to various sages, personal troubles and social maladjustments are all due to the fact that people have separated themselves from their divine source and live according to their own will and notions..." Aldous Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 1945

"It is precisely the loss of connection with the past [and where we come from], our uprootedness, which has given rise to the discontents of civilization and to such flurry and haste..." - Carl Jung, Swiss psychologist, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 1963, p.236

"Heaven makes us human. We forget it at our peril. Without knowledge of a larger geography of where we came from and where we are going again when our physical bodies die, we are lost." - Eben Alexander, MD, neurosurgeon and author of *Proof of Heaven* and *Map of Heaven*, 2014

We know so much more about the answers to these questions than ever before (although we still have a lot to learn about them), and we must share what we know. The purpose of this reflection is to explore these questions from the perspective of the *Common Rule*, which is primarily rooted in the Gospels. Of course, the Gospels are several millennia old, but new understanding of the nature of humans more than validates the wisdom and guidance supplied by them and related scriptures.

At our most basic level, we come from God, spend some time here on a very unique place to learn about, and spread, God's love; then we return to God when we pass from this life. The more we can learn about our true nature while we're here, and use it to spread God's love, the more we will benefit from the gifts of the Kingdom, both now and in the next life. But let's look at each question a little more deeply. (References to the *Common Rule* will appear as *chapter,paragraph*. For example, CR 4,3 stands for chapter 4, paragraph 3.)

I. Where did I come from?

Simply put, you came from God. God reminds us in Jeremiah that, "Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you." You were on God's mind when God laid the foundations of the universe. God, as a Trinity of love, needed to share this love. You are part of God's creation that has been given the ability to love, too.

"The creation story tells us that God formed people from the earth, and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life; and they became living beings. People were created in God's image, according to God's likeness. And God called this 'good.'" CR 5,1

God did not create you in separation, but in unity. You are not alone here on earth, because God abides in you, and you in God, and in each other – as One body in Christ's love. You must not forget where you came from, because that is what will sustain you and guide you until you return home.

"Truly, God abides in us, and we abide in God. God has made us into a temple where God is intimate with our soul. We belong to God." CR 1,4. And, there is nothing that can come between us and God's love for us – nothing. CR 1,5.

II. Who am I?

You are a combination of flesh and spirit. You are composed of a body, mind, and spirit. And you have been given some common qualities – the image of God to be precise – as well as some unique interests, talents, and skills, that are all your own. Even though these special gifts are not always appreciated or valued by society, they are deeply treasured by God.

The flesh part of you is the result of many, many years of gene sharing, and consists of atoms that are as old as the sun itself. Within this special body, God placed a piece of God-self to bring it to life. "The core of our identity, our actual being and soul, is sometimes referred to as the True Self. It knows who we really are." CR 5,2

Each person has a piece of this same God-self. It's what makes us all alike in some way. Deep down inside, what God called "good", are pieces we all share: peace, joy, love, patience, mercy, understanding, self-control, etc. (See Galatians 5:22-23 for a complete list.) When you allow your true self to immerge, these are the things you see in yourself and in others. They're in there, but sometimes buried under the false self – the dysfunctional ego.

And because you were built this way, you want to have genuine relationships with other people, and with God. "God breathed into us the Divine image, which includes a strong desire to be in unity with each other and with creation. From this we have a strong desire to find God." CR 1,2.

"[Our True Self] is connected to all the other True Selves in the world, and to God. Because of this, we are all interrelated and interdependent." CR 5,2

So, you are a child of God. Created by God, loved by God, and sustained by God. You are similar to other people because you have similar God-image characteristics, but you are different because you have special talents, gifts, and interests to be used while you're here on earth. Which brings us to the next question...

III. Why am I here?

God is love, and one huge result of love is creativity. God loves to make things both big and small. God made the stars and the planets; the birds, fishes, and animals; the wind, clouds, and rain; and you.

But there are things that God wants *you* to create – things that must come from your own loving heart: compassion, mercy, forgiveness, appreciation, gratitude, thankfulness – the things that can only take place when one person decides to love another. It must be through free will – it must be through choice. If God forces it, then it's not love. So, part of why we're here is to help God create more love, more goodness, more understanding.

You're here to feel, experience, know, and share these various feelings of love. You're here to grow in this life, to become more aware, to expand your consciousness – to prepare yourself for life in the next world, and leave this one a better place than what you found it. No, it's not an easy place to live, but the deepest way to learn is in a place where there is choice – where free-will can go wrong (and often does), where there could be conflict, where there can be disagreements:

"Only here, in life on earth, were the opposites clash together, can the general level of consciousness be raised." - Carl Jung, Swiss psychologist, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 1963, p.311

To make the most of your stay here, to be able to withstand the bumps and bruises, you need to stay grounded to the God within you. As you walk this journey, you need to learn as much about yourself as you can, too. (See question 2 above.) It is there that you will discover both you and God.

“The path to knowing God is to know our own soul more. The path to knowing our own soul is to know God more. The path to each is prayer (meditation, contemplation).” CR 9,6

“Once the essence of our being has been established [that is, we are discovering our True Self], it will gently flow into doing [service]. We must move forward in service, filling our journey with loving acts, serving the Lord in our own unique and special way, based on the interests, talents, and skills we have been given.” CR 15,9

“[Peoples’] purpose is to love, know, and be united with the immanent and transcendent Godhead – we must die to selfness and live to the Spirit.” Aldous Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, 1945

Then, at some point in your journey, it will be time to pass from this earth and ascend to a greater existence, bringing with you a higher level of understanding and compassion; a deeper ability to truly love.

IV. Where am I going?

Once you leave here, there is only one place to go – back home to God. Besides the description that Jesus and the Scriptures give us of the Kingdom, there are thousands of near-death experiences, visions, and spiritual insights that all add to our understanding of what is to come. Reports from those who have gotten a peek at it (or even spent some time there) consistently describe a place run by, and filled with, love. It’s a place that is already in us and around us. What we call “death” is actually a passing from one dimension into another. Life goes on, and never ends.

“There are indications that at least a part of the psyche is not subject to the laws of space and time.” - Carl Jung, Swiss psychologist, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 1963, p.304

The good things you had here will be there, too, but better. People will be closer to their true selves than ever – relationships will be deep and loving. And, yes, Spot the dog, and Boots the cat will be there, too. (I wonder about hairballs, though...)

“From one point of view, death appears as a joyful event. In light of eternity, it is a wedding, a *mysterium coniunctionis*. The soul attains, as it were, its missing half, it achieves wholeness.” - Carl Jung, Swiss psychologist, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 1963, p.314

“We are on a journey without an end. When this life ends, another begins. There’s more – there’s always more. God’s unconditional love for us does not change when we pass from this life into the next. May the love and presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.” CR 15,10.

SUMMARY

We all need to make the answers to these four questions more real in our lives. Solid answers to these questions help to keep this life in perspective. This earthly life is not all that there is. Deep down inside, we know that we are not just physical human beings who accidentally came from nowhere and will vanish into nothingness at our physical death. Many of us have experienced glimpses of “the other side,” or know someone who has. These are valid experiences which need to be shared and reflected upon.

Study the Gospels and the *Common Rule* further for additional insights and reflections on these core questions of life. What other parts of the *Common Rule* address these core questions? See what you can find.

How do the answers to these questions impact your day-to-day living?
How do they influence your outlook on life?