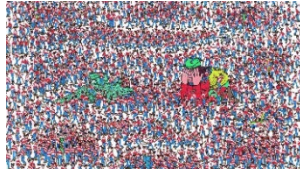
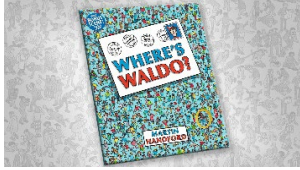


The Big Picture

Part IV: Sensibly Seeing Our Destiny

May 7, 2023



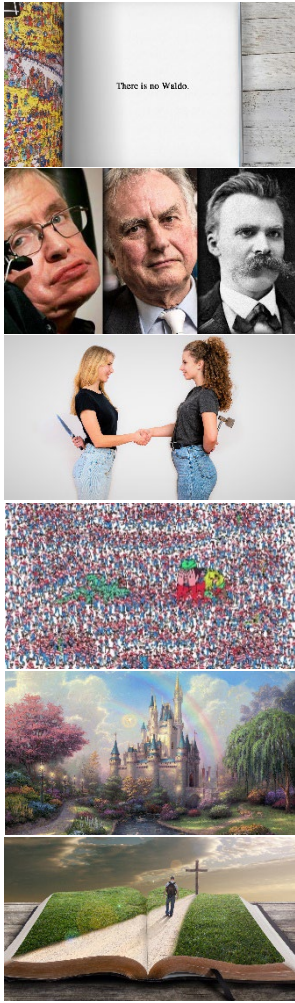
Today we're looking for the last piece of a working worldview to complete a story that actually makes sense of our life – and all its non-stop chaos and confusion. Because, to really *get* what's going on down here, we gotta find *reasonable* answers that explain our origin, meaning, morality, and destiny. And after dealing with *three*, it's time to talk destiny so we can finally *see* the big picture from beginning to *end*, and judge for ourselves: are our answers *rational* and *realistic*? So let's start with *the* question from the finish: **How does your story end?**

This is *the* most important question to consider, cuz its *answer* is what *everything* in *every* story is all *about*. It's the X that marks the spot we're trying to *get to*; making it the *reason* behind all our actions. It's the final piece of the *puzzle* that pulls everything *together* so we can *see* the *big* picture. And it's the payoff that *proves* whatever we did, actually *worked out!* And *how* a story *ends*, is what we use to judge *if* the book was worth the read. And in the *exact* same way, **whatever we believe to be our ending, has the power to change how we see the rest of our story.**

For example, imagine two passengers on the *same* plane to Chicago. 22A is on his way home to a wife and kids after being deployed for 18 months overseas. So how's the trip? And the *turbulence*? Well, *great!* Every *minute* is eager excitement **because all he's thinking about is what's waiting once he's off the plane!** And the turbulence is *no* big deal if it's what you *gotta* go through to get home! He just wants to finish the flight! But now consider seat 22B. He's on the *same* flight to the *same* place, but Chicago is *not* his home. It's where his mother's *funeral* is being held. So how's *his* trip? And *his* turbulence? *Awful.* Every minute is *agony* he wants to *avoid* **because all he's thinking about is what's waiting for him once he's off the plane.** And the *turbulence* keeps turning *his* thoughts to his *own* death. And yet, he *doesn't* want the painful flight to *end* because *that's* when he'll have to confront an even *worse* reality.

Well, **this life is our plane!** Down here, we all got *on* at birth and we're riding *together* till death do us part. And we all *have to* wonder, **what's waiting once we're off the plane?** *That's* the worldview question of *destiny* that we all have to answer. And since we've been talking through the steps that moved *me* from the *secular* side into the *Christian* camp, I want to you to hear the honest answer to our *destiny* that the '*science-says*' worldview says is waiting at the end of our flight: **Death.**

No *if's*, *and's*, or *but's*. You become a pile of *worm food* and *fertilizer* and there is *no* more '*you*' in the universe. Elvis has *left* the building. You're *bereft* of life and ceased to *be*. You *are* an *ex-human*.



Some ending, huh? It's like searching every page of *Where's Waldo* and finally coming to the end to find it says, **"There is no Waldo."** Really?! *That's* a book worth reading? And *calling* it *Where's Waldo* is at least *misleading* if not totally *dishonest*. And I'd feel like I got cheated by an author who *wanted* to waste my time just to be a *jerk!* And *that's* how I felt when I discovered **atheists have a set of answers that say there is no answer.** What was the point of saying *anything?*

And suddenly, I realized, **there wasn't a point; and they knew that.** Hawking, Dawkins, Nietzsche, and the rest were way too smart to miss the *meaninglessness* of all *their* tireless work, so *why* did they do it? Why *bother* if it didn't *matter?* Because **they did have a purpose!** *Those liars!* Nobody would ever *actually* read *Where's Waldo* without believing there was a Waldo; just like no one would ever *actually* live *life* without believing there was a *truth!* Sure we can *say* it's what we believe, but what a person really thinks deep down shows up in their *actions.* Cuz **what we actually do reveals what we actually believe.** The proof is in the pudding, and from secular philosopher to committed Christian, everyone gets up every *day* to *do* things that reveal we *all* feel there *is* something that makes our story *worth* reading and makes our life *worth* living. And there's an ending we're *wired* to want even though it's absolutely *un-natural* by earthly standards; **"and they all lived happily ever after."** Because that ending gives us something that is as critical to *life* as food, water, and shelter. **Hope. Hope is the force behind everything we do, and without it, we wouldn't do anything!** And we wouldn't *have* hope if we *really* believed death was our destiny.

So because we all *live* lives like they have meaning, there *must* be a *reason* that **deep down we don't believe death is our destiny!** And the Christians were like, **"Pick us! We know this one!"** –

[As a Christian] Your faith and love have arisen from the hope laid up for you in Heaven, which you have heard about in the message of truth, the Gospel – Colossians 1:5 NET

Christians live like life has *meaning* cuz they read the book that promised our trip down here is headed *home* to a life full of family and *not* a funeral full of *death.* And they *trust* it because it *also* made sense of all the other stuff we've all experienced. And since *that* ending has the power to change the heart of every passenger on the flight, the book itself says to *share* the big secret!

Always be prepared to give an answer to *everyone* who asks you to give the *reason* for the hope that *you* have. – 1 Peter 3:15 NIV

And here's why it works that way: **to fix our flaw we have to want that reason!** Back in the beginning, we rejected what God offered as our destiny – so to get it back, we have to learn to really want it! **We have to see it's God's Word that completes the big picture of perfection!** *Ya get it?!* The *partial* picture is a *setup!* This life is *supposed* to be chaos and confusion – because He's showing us what happens when *we're* in charge. And He's letting us live life on our own so that what we experience would lead us to crave what we're missing... *Him!*



Cuz whether it's what we've *seen* in His creation, what we've *felt* through His Spirit or what we've *heard* from His Word – **everything in this life is a shadow to get us to go find what's behind.** I love this illustration – cuz it shows how necessary each perspective is in seeing the real thing.



And like a good *teacher*, God's gonna do what it takes to get us to see *the real thing* for ourselves. Cuz like a *bad student*, we wouldn't take Him at His Word. So God gave us *this* life to teach us *our* lesson; because **life is a teacher we can't tune out!** And actions speak louder than words!



For it is God's will that by *doing* good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. – 1 Peter 2:15 NIV

And thanks to the atheists I discovered that **what we do could even silence ourselves!** Cuz the whole secular gang *keeps* working *every* day to prove that their beliefs are *right*, *true*, and *important* – even though *those* beliefs state *nothing* is objectively *right*, *true*, or *important!* And they're not just *silencing themselves*; their actions prove that they *too*, want to pursue that hidden hope of a better destiny. And the same went for *me*. Even as I *argued* atheism against Christianity, I was *living* like I had a *hope*. I liked *good* things, I felt a *purpose*, and I was looking for *love*. All because deep down, I *knew* this life was meant for more than death.

But why couldn't I build those beliefs into a reasonable Christian worldview that worked out on paper so I could win all the arguments. Well, I finally saw problem with that approach: **I'd be the boss.** Demanding to know before I trust and obey was making God meet my standard and *that* meant I still suffered from the fatal flaw I'm here to fix; **believing I'm the authority on truth.**



And I never thought it would be the good in *my* own life that would shut up *my* own ignorance. But the more I just lived like there *was* the happily ever after life that God promised – the more I started seeing things like love, truth, peace, and joy. And those *shadows* of the *real* thing behind everything began to add up for me. And as each experience grew my view, God built my faith in the big picture He painted of our *true* destiny.



[Because] Faith is the *substance* of things *hoped* for, the evidence of things not seen. – Hebrews 11:1 NKJ

Look, there's no better substance than personal experience to build our beliefs – and God's so clever, He found a way that *every* day, we'll produce another pile of evidence. And here's what all that experience teaches: **Every bit of hopeless pain and consuming confusion comes from trying to live with fake truth.** Cuz just like eating *fake* food, **it's hard to swallow, it makes you sick to your stomach, and it can't satisfy your hunger.** And *yet* we all have an appetite that we can't ignore!

We're wired to want answers because it's how **God keeps us focused on fixing our flaw to get us back home.** Because He loves His kids. And He comes after the lost – and that's every one of us Prodigal kids who ever left home; from angry atheist to confused Christian.

So if you or someone you know is struggling with *any* of the same stuff I've shared in this mini-series, I want to encourage you to finish what God started with a few reminders:

- 1. Be ready to be changed.** Remember *truth* is true regardless of what you *want* to be true. Use that confidence to challenge your worldview, trusting that real truth will surface. **God won't break and neither will you.** So allow yourself to be built up by God's truth as your perspective grows each day – it's called spiritual growth and that's the meaning of life! So be willing to let go of any comfortable answers when better ones come to light.
- 2. Grab what's good!** Lean into your instinct to go after what's good. You are in this place to get something meaningful *accomplished*, so **go do it!** Question and challenge *everything* but seek and serve the good stuff only. This life is ready to teach what we're looking for when we're willing to plug in and play out the truth that produces good fruit.
- 3. Live a life of love.** If love leads to living the life of perfection – then **don't ever do another thing without love.** You sent an email – where was the love? You went to the grocery store – where was the love? You made tacos for dinner – where was the love?! Practice what He commands to see if it produces what He promised; that's the scientific method for crying out loud!
- 4. Heal hurt with hope!** Keep your focus fixed on the finish! Don't forget, **life's up there while death's down here.** And *life* provides the *purpose* behind everything we're experiencing in the big picture. And **purpose is the ultimate painkiller.** Because it gives us a good reason to get through the tough stuff that hurts to learn. From forgiving a friend to having a baby – **keeping our eyes on the prize empowers us to push through!**
- 5. Remove fear from your faith.** If you move into the Christian camp don't avoid discussions of science and philosophy because you're afraid of atheist answers. Remember, **it requires the same faith to say there's nothing that it does to say there's something.** And if anyone tells you the sciences have proven Christians wrong – kindly remind them that two out of three Nobel Prize winners of the 20th c. would disagree; along with the guys who proposed the Big Bang, the model of our solar system, and the entire field of quantum mechanics! So pump the brakes.
- 6. Make things make sense.** Remember, becoming a Christian doesn't get you off the intellectual hook! We shouldn't just be confident; we should be compelling! If God is indeed the truth behind life that explains everything, **our job is to ask, seek, and knock for those answers!** We have all been born with an instinct to extract truth, a life to experience truth, and a Bible to explain truth. So wrestle with your beliefs until they make sense – because *truth does.*
- 7. Act now!** Stop talking and start walking – that's where we really learn life's lessons. And God designed things that way so that you'd get home with no delay. So:

Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "*Today*," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness [that's the fake truth]. We have come to share in Christ [that's real truth], if indeed we hold our original conviction [to love God and all His kids] firmly to the very end. – Hebrews 3:12-14 NIV

So go get 'em! Cuz as Spurgeon said, **"No man ever served God by doing things tomorrow."**