

Who Are You, Why Are You?

By Van Yandell

Jeremiah 1: 5 "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou came forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

From the time we enter school, we have been taught individuality. No two of us are alike. We do not look alike; we do not think alike and our personalities, interests and abilities are as varied as the stars in the universe.

From kindergarten through our senior year in high school, the concept of the individual has been emphasized. Our emotional, mental, spiritual and physical variances define us as individuals.

At our conception, the chance of us becoming who we are is one chance in hundreds of millions. Had our father's sperm that made us, not "won the race," we would be a completely different person.

The human female ovary usually releases only one egg per cycle (ovulation). The human male, on the other extreme, produces literally millions of sperm every day of his life. One source states that production rate in the average male is 1500 sperm per second.

I asked AI, "If my mother's egg had been fertilized by a different one of my father's sperm, would I be a different person?" The answer received is profoundly convincing and specific.

"Yes, absolutely! If a different sperm from your father had fertilized your mother's egg, you would be a genetically unique individual, essentially a different person, much like a fraternal twin or sibling, but still sharing the same mother and father; every sperm carries a slightly different mix of your father's DNA, so a different combination with the egg results in a new, unique genetic blueprint."

To consider my existence is one chance in millions is a little scary but it is also a direct implication. Should I be happy or sad at my existence? This opinion changes daily for many of us but we must consider the why of our existence.

Psalm 139:13-14 "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knows right well."

Many of us have preached and taught God's creation is specific, planned, and deliberate. Did God actually di-

rect the union of our parents' sperm and egg? Once again, why do we exist as we are?

In the leading scripture, Jeremiah 1: 5, conclusively stated is that God created Jeremiah for a reason and a specific purpose. Can we apply that reasoning to ourselves? The answers to that question of course will be debated for generations to come.

Some argue this verse applies only to Jeremiah. "I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." This could imply a specific reference only to Jeremiah? Had this been the case, why are so many other millions of people obviously used by God to accomplish some seemingly predetermined task?

Did God create Mohammed, Buddha and Abraham accidentally or did He have a plan? If God had a plan for you and me, no doubt He had a plan for them.

Did God create the notable evangelists, missionaries, doctors, scientists, welders and truck drivers with specificity? In this writer's opinion: Absolutely!

To think of ourselves as biological accidents is depressing and lessens our reasons for living. Believing that a spiritual supernatural God exists and planned our be-

ing is questionable to many. Those that believe in and follow the teachings of an omniscient and omnipotent God, maintained is a certainty.

For those that prefer to believe we all are mutations and our existence is purely accidental, consider the uniqueness of your mind and body.

Could the perfection of our cardiovascular systems, our digestive systems and our brain functions have evolved by accident? Could have the regeneration of our blood/bone marrow, skin, and the growth of our fingernails be coincidental? Those questions are yours to answer.

Whereas many of us have more questions than answers, what makes sense? Does God know in advance what we will do; what we will become and specifically, how we will promote His Kingdom? Some of us believe "Of course He does!"

As I have grown older, I have come to understand, I know nothing. All one can do is analyze and evaluate available information, and those things we see/witness and form our thinking on is that existing information.

It appears our best (and possibly only) source of reliable information is the Holy Bible. I have come to believe everything else is specula-

tion, opinion, fiction or fantasy. God's word proves itself from within itself.

Can we determine beyond our own thoughts the will of God? Many believe His Holy Spirit teaches us and even in some cases, manipulates us.

Thus, the verse Proverbs 16:3 "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established," takes on a completely distinctive meaning and a separate meaning for each of us.

Submission to God's will and plan for us has a new and different meaning as we realize our differences. As Jesus told Ananias (Acts 9: 15) that Paul "is my chosen vessel," each of us has a matchless and irreplaceable purpose.

You are not an accident! The teaching of Savior Jesus as being the one that provides for us eternal salvation by our faith based belief in Him is a teaching to be told to the world. Evidence points to this as a substantiated fact; we are not accidental beings and we have a purpose.

Van Yandell is a retired Industrial Arts teacher, an ordained gospel evangelist and commissioned missionary. His email is vmy3451@gmail.com

Change Is Difficult, But We Experience It Every January

By Tommy Druen

A few years ago, I came across a historical photograph that caught my attention. It showed a massive traffic jam in Sweden in 1967. Traffic jams, of course, are nothing remarkable. We've all endured them—whether during rush hour in a city or stuck behind a slow-moving tractor on a one-lane country road. But this one was different. The photograph captured a moment of complete and utter chaos, with no obvious cause.

Having read the caption of the photo, I knew the basic reason for the congestion, but I hadn't given it much thought until Dr. Patrick DeVane, my pastor, referenced it in a recent sermon. He told the story of September 3, 1967—the day Sweden experienced Högertrafikomläggning—

gen, better known to us non-Swedish speakers as the day the country switched from driving on the left-hand side of the road to the right.

This was not a decision the Swedes made lightly. The issue was hotly debated for eight years before a final determination was reached. The reason was that all their neighboring countries drove on the right and the vast majority of the vehicles owned by Swedes were designed to be driven on the right. The decision was made with the intent to reduce accidents. Even then though, the change was not immediate. The switch was scheduled to occur four years later, allowing ample time for a comprehensive public information campaign.

And what a campaign

it was. There were the expected television and radio advertisements, along with signs and billboards. But the Swedes went further. The logo promoting the switch appeared on gloves, milk cartons, and even commemorative underwear. Perhaps the most inspired move of all was a songwriting contest hosted by Swedish television, inviting musicians to write a song about the change. The winning entry was Keep to the Right, Svensson, written by Peter Himmelstrand and performed by The Telstar. And, if you are curious, it is available on YouTube.

After four years of unrelenting messaging, you might assume the transition would be seamless. And, relatively speaking, it was. On

the day of the switch, there were fewer traffic accidents than on an average day. The following day, there were even fewer. Clearly, the campaign had worked—or so it seemed.

Over the next six weeks, accident rates slowly crept back up. Within a year, they had returned to pre-switch levels. Well-intended as it was, the goal was not achieved.

The lesson, to me, is that change is difficult. And there may be no better time of year to illustrate that truth than January. Many of us make New Year's resolutions—well-intended promises to ourselves. Yet by the time this column appears, a good number of them will already be broken.

According to Drive

Research, 80 percent of Americans who make resolutions believe they'll stick with them

throughout the year. Only 9 percent actually do. And 23 percent fail before the end of the first week.

Did some of those people know they would fail? Probably. But I suspect most did not. They had good intentions. They had desire. Like the Swedes, they started strong. But life intervenes. One distracted moment and muscle memory takes over—you drift into the familiar left-hand lane, or into the McDonald's drive-thru. It happens.

I've made plenty of resolutions over the years. A few I've kept, but most I haven't. Even when I've succeeded, I've often found myself sliding back to old habits. One year, I resolved to lose 15 pounds. I did—fairly quickly, in fact. Goal achieved. And not long after, I was right back where I started. It felt

less like learning a lesson and more like cramming for a test.

The novelist Henry Miller once wrote, "One's destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things." With that in mind, I no longer make resolutions with rigid finish lines. Instead of losing 15 pounds, I aim to eat healthier. Instead of reading 50 books, I want to read more. I'm less interested in temporary achievements and more interested in living better.

As the Swedes taught us, lasting change is hard. There will be setbacks along the way. But if we focus less on a defined destination and more on reshaping our habits, change may finally stick—and chaos may give way to something that feels a little more natural.

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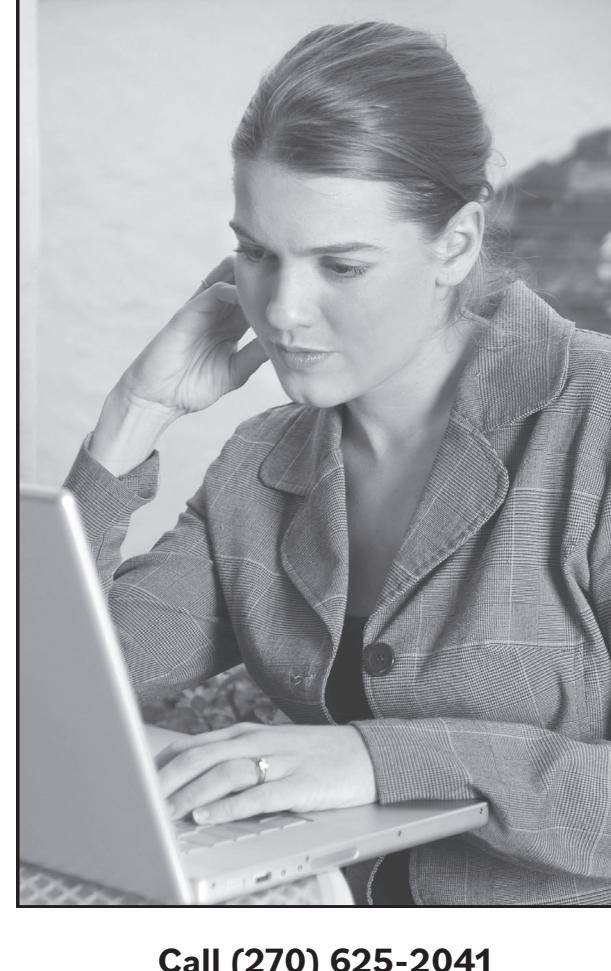
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