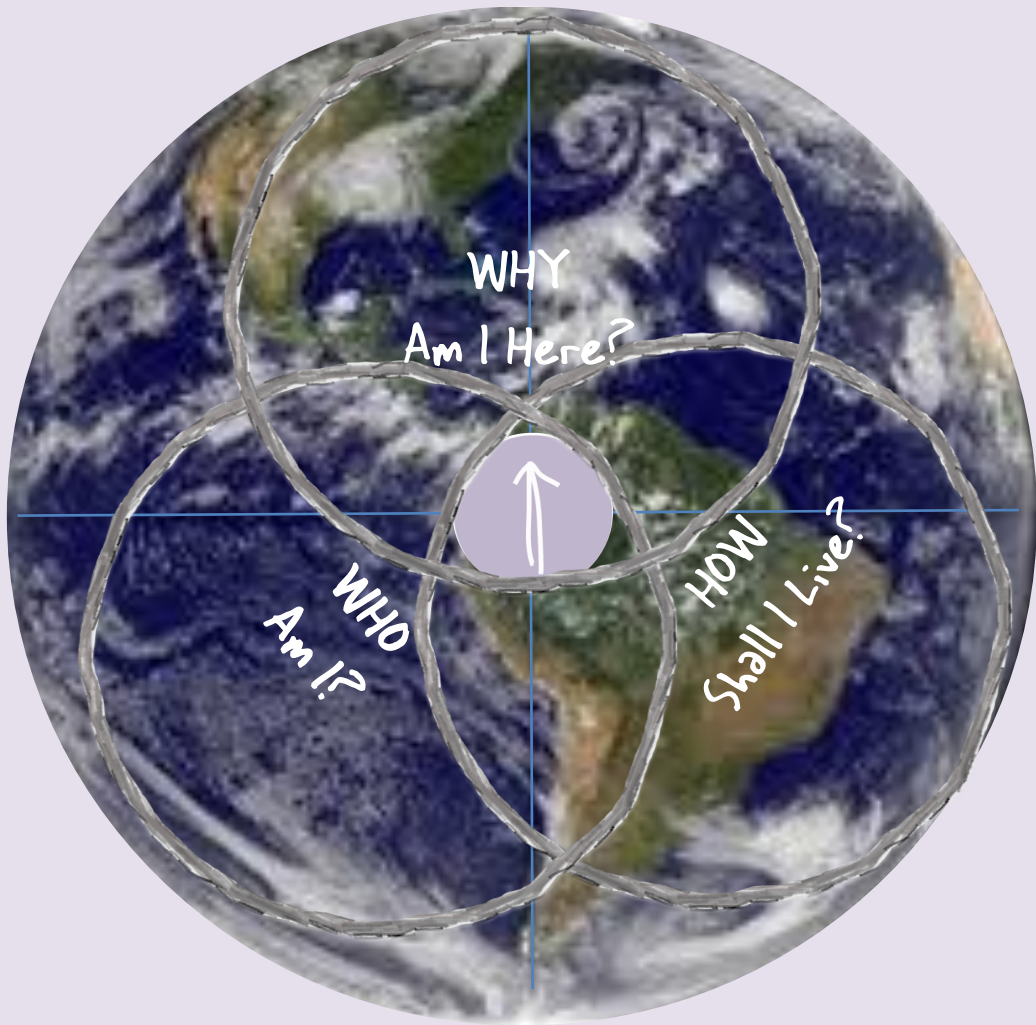




# THE ESSENTIAL OF THE POWER OF ONE



## Life's 3 Big Questions





## PRACTICE

Even though most churches in the Western world are on the decline, they will be mostly filled on Christmas Eve and Easter. Why? And why will they be mostly empty again the week after?

Take a minute, reflect and write.

Discuss with your fellow builders at your tables.

## Post Practice Review

What does this have to do with why you are here?

"LifeWay Research also found 61 percent say they typically attend church during Christmastime. And of those who don't attend, 57 percent said it is likely they would attend if someone invited them."



What's the attraction for Christmas Eve and Easter only (CEO) church-goers? For many it's for the tradition (sort of like watching *Christmas Vacation* or *White Christmas*.) along with the family obligation to please mom. For others, they "do it for the kids" -- after all, what little girl doesn't love to be seen all day in her Easter dress and ribbons? For the parents, these services are pretty safe -- it's easier to be anonymous, fit in, and not look stupid (most of us know a few Christmas carols). Like the Super Bowl where you don't have to care about the game to go to a party, these are big events in our culture with a lot of hype. They're overall positive "feel-good" experiences and not too awkward (apart from passing the bag or the dilemma when it's time for communion). For those who identify their heritage as Christian, it's a nice simple way to check the box.

And, apart from all the trappings, there is a subliminal attraction because Christmas Eve and Easter are ultimately about Jesus, of whom people have a much more positive view than about religion, Christians, church or the Bible.

Which also explains why most people don't GO BACK.

However, we're still dancing around the real question. If the *only* true satisfying and fulfilling answer to "what *is* life?" is the *zoe* life -- i.e. the eternal, abundant life found in Jesus -- then WHY doesn't everybody who hears about it experience it 24/7? Or at least SOME of the time? Why is this life-changing message not getting through and taking root?

## NOTES

"Almost three-quarters of Americans (73%) say they are a Christian, while only one-fifth (20%) claim no faith at all (that includes atheists and agnostics)."  
 - State of The Church 2016 (Barna Research)





## NOTES

By way of reminder, at **BUILT TO LIVE!** we believe what's missing in most Christians and most churches is an interactive, intentional form of learning we call **BUILT TO LIVE!** practice. To be truly engaged, you must be challenged to **THINK, WRITE** and **TALK** deeply about what you believe and why, and be jolted out of going through the motions.

And let's face it, in the world we've been trained to go through the motions since grade school in our most fundamental thinking about life. For most of us, it's second nature to unquestionably accept Maslow's hierarchy as deterministic of our human nature. According to Maslow's hierarchy, Life's 3 Big Questions must be answered in this order:

1. "HOW Shall I Live?" to satisfy innate physiological needs, the need for safety, and relational needs.
2. "WHO Am I?" to esteem honor and recognition in your identity.
3. WHY Do I Live? to self-actualize your highest potential, purpose and significance in life.

At **BUILT TO LIVE!**, we believe this thinking conforms to the world we live in, but is certainly not the gospel truth nor the path for finding true life. In fact, we believe the order of Life's 3 Big Questions for *zoe* is exactly the opposite, which is counter-intuitive, counter-cultural and counter to everything we've been taught growing up.

We will have to slow down to go faster. As we will discover on our Builder's Journey, we must be consciously awakened and challenged to understand what we have BELIEVED, and to realize just how self-limiting these beliefs have been.

Are you ready to go deeper? If so, it's time for more practice.





## PRACTICE

Go back to what we just read and underline something which hit you. Write about why you underlined it. Then discuss with your fellow builders.

Have you ever challenged the thinking of Maslow's hierarchy? Why do you think the order of Life's 3 Big Questions matters?

Tell me more.

“Jesus answered, It is written:  
‘Man shall not live on bread alone,  
but on every word that comes from  
the mouth of God.’”

- Matthew 4:4, NIV



"Most men live lives of quiet desperation;  
and die with their song still inside them."

- Henry David Thoreau

## PRACTICE

Draw 3 distinct circles on random parts of the page. Label the first one “Why am I here?” Label the second circle “Who am I?” Label the third circle “How shall I live?”

Now read Thoreau’s quote again as you study the circles you just drew. These disconnected circles represent the disconnected way most people work and live, without clarity and without alignment on their Don Quixote quest for meaning and purpose. How does life feel when you’re living this way? Why? How do you think people normally go about coping with the resulting dissonance? How do YOU cope with it? Write.

If you were to re-draw the circles for your life, how would you draw them for where you see yourself today? How about for where you’d like to be someday? Why? Write some more.

Discuss at your tables with your fellow builders.

## Post Practice Review

Take turns having a volunteer from each table broadcast to the whole group what they learned.

What melody lines are you hearing?

What does this have to do with why we are here at this practice?



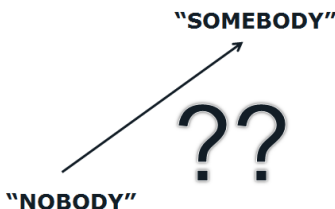
## NOTES

## LIFE'S 3 BIG QUESTIONS:

At **BUILT to LIVE!**, we believe “Why am I here?”, “Who am I?”, and “How shall I live?” are the 3 big questions of life. We also believe **FEW** people – including people of faith – have clarity, depth and alignment in their answers. Most never attain it.

As a result, work and life is filled with chronic, nagging dissonance. “My life is out of balance” not only misses the point but perpetuates an endless search for a holy grail which won’t be found by tweaking “how” you spin the various plates of life or looking for the next “it”. It also fosters neurosis because just when it seems the perfect balance has been struck, an unexpected phone call or interruption blows it up. This triggers a merry-go-round search for control, which becomes its own endless goose chase. For most, it leads to settling for windmills; a resigned existence far short of the abundant life Jesus promised

Houston, we have a problem! And our problem is confounded by the twisted order the world goes about asking the 3 big questions. The order **MATTERS**, and the **WORLD** gets it backwards.



Most of us grew up trying to fill our inner void believing that **DOING** leads to **BEING**, i.e. “if ‘HOW I live’ is successful enough, it will make me (hopefully) a **SOMEBODY**...which will (hopefully) answer ‘WHO am I’? Becoming a successful enough ‘somebody’ will (hopefully) then answer the nagging question ‘WHY do I live?’” This deficit form of thinking is the way of the world. It’s a wicked trap because your identity and significance are always on the line. In the eyes of the world it’s all about what you do and how well you do it. Performing like an MVP is what it takes to make yourself into a valuable person. When this paradigm is applied to the search for life, Thoreau couldn’t be more right about it leading to lives of quiet desperation.

What you believe matters. It matters a lot. Let’s go in for a deeper look.

“There is a way that appears to be right to a many but in the end it leads to death.”

- Proverbs 14:12 (NSB)



## PRACTICE

Remember playing the party game “pin the tail on the donkey” when you were in Kindergarten? For this practice, we need a volunteer from each table willing to be blindfolded. After they can't see, take them outside the room until we are ready.

Next, on one of the walls in an obscure place of the room, tape a piece of paper with a bulls-eye and a cross-hair drawn in the middle of it.

Now bring back our blind-folded teammates back into the room. Give them a marker (or a pen or whatever) and tell them they have 80 seconds to try to find the paper and mark the cross-hair of the bulls-eye. Observers must remain quiet and provide no hints and answer no questions (although someone gifted in mercy may serve as a guide to avoid our teammate getting injured!). Have someone keep a timer and call out every 10 seconds corresponding to the passing of another decade in life. When time expires, remove the blindfolds.

As a post-mortem, everyone go back to your tables and take a couple minutes to write about what you observed and how it felt as time ticked on.

Discuss at your tables with your fellow builders. What was it like for the ones blindfolded? What was it like for the observers?

## Post Practice Review

Take turns having a volunteer from each table broadcast to the whole group what they learned.

What does this have to do with why we are here at this practice?



## NOTES

The game illustrates man's search for life as his world turns in slow motion with lots of distractions. At mid-life, the quest to find the X gets more desperate and can lead to wild out-of-character swings searching for the "it". Mid-life crisis sets in as pent-up frustration reaches a tipping point with a growing realization time is running out. Major relational failures can result, followed by guilt, regret and resigned depression. It's an anxious "Dread and DO" lifestyle. No wonder America falls asleep with the TV on to numb itself.

And, no wonder why the millennial generation is cynical, more pessimistic and more depressed. "Anything but that" is the sad refrain of most children contemplating their parents' lives. But knowing the direction you DON'T want to take may be correct in what it rejects, but it usually heads off on another tangent just as lost. According to Dr. Martin Seligman, the top two influences a hundred years ago in American culture were faith and family. Even if life was harder in many ways, it was simpler, and psychologically healthier. Today the top 2 influences are the media and where you work – or, simply put, the world system. Madonna was right, we live in a material world, one starving for relationships and authentic spirituality.

Millennials have been sold a lie they can do anything they want, which makes the American Dream a nightmare. In the name of the esteem movement, we have gone overboard to convince our kids how smart they are, and in so doing cursed them to believe life will somehow just come their way without the hard work our grandparents took for granted. This generation is saddled with depression, anxiousness, addiction and debt unlike any other before it. Teen suicide is the gruesome, brutal statistic testifying just how forsaken life has become. When grades and careers don't come as easy as they are supposed to, the conclusion becomes deeply personal -- "I'm a failure."

Turn the page. It's time for some more practice and more clarity.

"Depression is a disorder of the 'I,' a failing in your own eyes relative to your goals. In a society in which individualism is becoming rampant, people more and more believe that they are the center of the world. Such a belief system makes individual failure almost inconsolable."

- Dr. Martin Seligman,  
- Learned Optimism

## PRACTICE

Let's watch a movie clip about a frustrated symphony writer turned music teacher Mr. Holland and a frustrated red-haired oboe player wannabe named Miss Lang.



Write about what you saw. What could you relate to? What was she BELIEVING that led her to feel frustrated initially? How does it feel to live this way? In the second scene what changes? After you've finished writing, discuss at your tables.

## Post Practice Review

Broadcast what you learned about the importance of where you draw your identity. Do you see why the ORDER of the three questions matters? When she believed she already WAS a somebody in her daddy's eyes, what changed?

"What do you mean, 'If I can?'"  
 Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if  
 a person believes." "The father  
 instantly cried out, "I do believe,  
 but help me overcome my  
 unbelief!"

- Jesus, (Mark 9:23-24, NLT)



## NOTES

In the first part of the scene, Miss Lang “just wants to be good at SOMething.” She has fallen square into what Robert McGee, author of *The Search for Significance*, calls the Performance Trap. This is the belief & worldview that you are not Somebody and not Significant unless & until you do \_\_\_\_ (fill in your blank of choice). Reaching your destination becomes your object of worship – an idol and a poor god. It turns a dream quest into a nightmare that always seems just out of reach. Even the Productive Actions you check off provide only fleeting satisfaction. You experience no rest, peace, freedom, joy, fulfillment – only slavery – which is written all over your face for your family & your team to see, no matter what you say to the contrary. It’s ‘Dread & Do’ on steroids, and like steroids, it eventually destroys you and undermines your relationships as you do to others the very thing you are doing to yourself.

Talk about the ultimate self-centered, others-controlling worldview! This dead-end road of deficit & perfectionistic thinking leads to self-delusion & lying to fill the dissonance gaps performance won’t. And, it inhibits your ability to perform at your best fully in the moment, free from the fear of failing (for Miss Lang, it was “too much lip on the mouthpiece”). Perhaps it’s most deceitful outcome is you can end up loathing the very thing you have strived to be “good” at, to the point where what you used to hope would be a blessing becomes a curse! In the workplace, the “Curse of Competence” is becoming so good at something you not only get more of it, but also so highly paid you become chained to your labor forever.

“Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?”

- Paul (*Romans 7:24, NLT*)

## PRACTICE

Take a few minutes and write:

What's your experience with the Performance Trap?

What has it led to?

What's been the effect on your relationships?

Do you believe this is what God wants?

Discuss at your tables.

## Post Practice Review

What clarity did you get?

What do you want to remember?



- Sisyphus



## NOTES

"In large measure, emotional dependency operates on a subconscious level. By that I mean most people do not sit on the side of the bed each morning thinking, 'OK, who am I going to hand my emotional stability to today?' We do not consciously plan to become dependent upon others, but it happens whether we are aware of it or not. People who are seeking to lessen the intensity of their anger help themselves immensely if they learn to become conscious of the presence of dependency so they can then make adjustments in their thoughts and behaviors. Primarily they need to adjust their core beliefs about personal worth."

- Dr. Les Carter, The Anger Trap

The Performance Trap reveals a second trap on the Builder's Journey, what Robert McGee calls Approval Addiction. It often 'lies' underneath the Performance Trap.

Approval Addiction is the belief is you aren't significant unless & until you have earned \_\_\_\_\_'s approval (e.g. of your boss, mentor, mom, dad, granddad, spouse...it may not even be a living person). Addiction Approval makes someone else your god with all the problems idols offer. . . your acceptance, peace, rest, freedom, joy, and fulfillment are always **conditional** on someone ELSE. Emotionally, you become their slave. Fear of rejection drives attempts at any cost to please the one who's approval you crave. And it makes you overly sensitive to criticism. When you aren't feeling secure, you will dodge or withdraw from important others to avoid their disapproval. A darker blind side of Approval Addiction is its demeaning effect on all your other relationships. Those whose approval you DON'T value end up feeling de-valued and/or thrown under the bus by YOU.

What do the Performance Trap and Approval Addiction have in common? They are both **conditional**. Having your acceptance and identity on the line if you don't perform is wicked enough, but Approval Addiction goes even further – which is even if you do "perform" it doesn't guarantee the acceptance of another. Which hoop you must jump through or how high you must jump is not even in your control. Someone else decides. As Dr. Les Carter summarizes, you've given over the keys to your emotional well-being to someone else. You have enabled a dependent relationship. If the other person likes having you addicted to their approval, both of you have enabled a co-dependent relationship.

It is a GOOD thing to desire to please others whom you respect. The problem comes when "man-pleasing" leads to compromise of self, truth, God, or others. In Scripture, Abraham (the 'father of faith') man-pleased out of cowardice when he was asked who his wife was by Abimilek king of Gerar. "Sarah is my sister," he answered. Wow! In Galatians 2, Paul reports he had to call out Peter for his man-pleasing -- before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles -- but when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself because he was afraid of what they would think!

Man-pleasing is harmful, and reveals misplaced faith at its root.

## PRACTICE

Take a few minutes and write:

What's your experience with Addiction Approval? With man-pleasing?

What has it led to?

What's been the effect on your relationships?

What is the core belief driving it?

Discuss at your tables.

## Post Practice Review

What clarity did you get?

What do you want to remember?

For further reading, check out the book *When People Are Big and God is Small* by Edward Welch.

"Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."

- Apostle Paul (*Galatians 1:10, NLT*)

## NOTES

As McGee points out, it can get even worse with other traps lurking underneath. We humans are loss averse by nature, so for ego survival we defend/deny/destroy if our performance is called into question or the approval we so desperately need is withheld. McGee calls the next trap the 'Blame Game.'

The subversive belief of the Blame Game is you have to be RIGHT to maintain your sense of self and significance. Its extreme conclusion is "those who fail (including yourself) are unworthy of love and deserve to be punished." Not-being-in-the-wrong becomes an obsession that leads to judging, self-delusion, self-protection, defensiveness, loathing, accusation, lashing out and retaliatory retribution. This is a reactive trap which distorts your thinking. Adverse feelings, thoughts or circumstances trigger a rush to judge. Questions surface subliminally, such as "whose fault is it? what's WRONG with me? what's wrong with THEM?"

Warning! This trap is particularly ugly, toxic and dangerous to self, relationships, marriages, families, teams & communities. It's legacy is dissension, divorce, lawsuits & hell of every kind. The Blame Game produces a hardened, unteachable heart, unwilling to listen to disconfirming feedback. It leads to hypocrisy of the highest order because your 'walk' and your 'talk' can't withstand the scrutiny of the truth.

It robs you of freedom and life as you ricochet back & forth from one extreme to another - from victimhood to survivorhood - where nothing is your fault but everything is everybody else's. Adam practiced the Blame Game in the garden of Eden when he pointed the finger at Eve, "this woman you gave me." It's one thing for a two-year old to act this way, but what a tragic result of the Fall when grown men & women do. Not much has changed today. The higher someone rises into a role of leadership, the more pressure they feel to need to be right because of the higher stakes for being wrong. Sadly, church pastors are not exempt, and can be peculiarly vulnerable to this trap at the expense not only of their own integrity but the name of Christ within their congregations and local communities.

God help us.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are."

- Jesus (Matthew 23:15, NLT)



## PRACTICE

Take a few minutes and write:

What's your experience with the Blame Game? Where do you feel the most pressure to be right all the time?

What has it led to?

What's been the effect on your relationships?

What is the core belief driving it?

Discuss at your tables.

## Post Practice Review

What clarity did you get?

What do you want to remember?

For further reading, check out the book *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life* by Marilee Adams.

"Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on... Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet... Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you."

- Paul (*Philippians 3:12-15, NASB*)



## NOTES

Finally, McGee identifies one more trap which can be both the root and culmination of the others. It's deep, it's widespread, and the saddest. It's the trap of SHAME.

No one is immune, and even those who seem the least likely are vulnerable. I will never forget facilitating practice with a non-profit leadership team of heroes who serve neglected youth & single moms in one of our city's most troubled neighborhoods. Since some weren't at our first practice, we wrote again on "why are you here?" A quiet one shared she'd had a breakthrough at our first practice. She'd spent years believing she didn't belong at the table with fellow leaders — her whole life she'd felt inferior to others when what others had observed is she can't HELP but lead! A senior member shared that he, too, had been holding back, not sharing his ideas, fearful of being judged & rejected as the outsider since he was the only director who didn't attend the same church.

Their fellow builders sat astonished. . .

This is a snapshot of what the Shame Trap does. It leads to self-sabotage, playing small, withdrawal not engagement, and a life lived under a mask. Controlled by past scars, fear, and believing your negative inner voice, shame traps you into thinking "I don't have what it takes", "I'm an imposter", "I'm not worthy", "I dare not just be myself", etc.

The Shame Trap is as old as the garden of Eden, but has the same consequences today. We hide from God, we hide from each other, and instead of fig leaves we hide behind not-so sophisticated personas which serve only to further undermine our fragile sense of self. The personas for women and men may evolve differently but the Shame Trap looks the same.

For little girls growing up under a controlling or distant mother, performance comes early by way of exacting standards which can't ever quite be satisfied. They conclude they can never measure up because something's wrong with them, which produces a deep inner shame. They begin working for love, taking on the burden of becoming the perfect daughter, perfect student, perfect employee, perfect wife, perfect mom, perfect friend, etc. — all at the heavy price of being perfectly miserable and feeling utterly alone.

"Then Shame, for women, is this web of unobtainable, conflicting, competing expectations about who we are supposed to be. And it's a straight-jacket."

- Brene' Brown  
- Listening To Shame, TEDS

For little boys, it's what Joe Ehrmann so accurately terms 'pseudo-masculinity.' The journey to manhood must be proven by success, early and often. First it's on the ballfield, where scarred grown-ups scream and shame the next generation into performing, still driven by a need to prove something about themselves. The coach's son is the one doubly-cursed.

The next stop on the journey is the bedroom, where the norm for sexual conquest, size and sustained virility has reached a level unknown by our forefathers. Just watch the Super Bowl on TV, and kindergartners and dads alike are bombarded with ads equivocating manhood with keeping an erection for 3 hr:59 min!

The billfold is pseudo-masculinity's scorekeeper. Little boys grow up into workaholics. The billfold decides status, privilege, who's got it, who doesn't, who's in the club and who's out.

The ultimate king-of-the-hill for pseudo-masculinity is determined in the board room. Not much has changed since the playground. Becoming the alpha dog means power, control, and who jumps to whose bark.

Pseudo-masculinity at its best produces only an illusion of glory which Satan uses to deceive men from discovering their true identity. At its worst, the shame induced is not just crippling -- it's mocking -- just like the playground days for the little boy who is always picked last. Whole cultures today have become shame-based and guilt-based.

And as John Eldredge so poignantly points out in *Wild At Heart*, these pseudo-identities have found their way into what we think of as 'church', where men are emasculated to make them tame and dutiful, i.e. 'nice men' Eldredge states this isn't God's idea -- 'nice' isn't found anywhere in the Bible. Women are kept *busy* at church -- this is their 'spirituality' yardstick, which in today's world means just one MORE role for women to live up to with lots of eyes watching and comparing. Finally, Eldredge suggests church pastors may be the most ensnared by pseudo-identities. In a post-Christian politically-correct culture where church attendance is in decline, their 'success' is measured by noses & numbers. No wonder church services have gone the way of the world, with entertainment programming and watered-down messages designed not to offend (or challenge) anyone.

## NOTES

"The three most destructive words that every man receives when he's a boy is when he's told to 'be a man'...."

- Joe Ehrmann



## PRACTICE

Watch this clip from Saving Private Ryan. Look for signs of the Performance Trap, Approval Addiction, the Blame Game, the Shame Trap, and pseudo-masculinity.



Write what you saw and what you can relate to.

Discuss with your fellow builders at your tables.

## Post Practice Review

What are the melody lines we saw?

What are the costs of living life this way?

What did you learn that you want to remember?

"Then the Lord God called to the man (Adam), and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.'"

- Genesis 3:9-10, NASB

So, the traps reveal a crucially important lesson - the ORDER of the 3 Big Questions matters – and WHERE you look to get answers matters. As we've seen, the world gets the order backwards, and its worldly answers turn out deceitfully empty.

When you look in Scripture, it's no wonder! Jesus exposes the ruler of this world to be Satan, NOT God (John 12:31). Confronting his religious adversaries, Jesus said, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) Satan lied to Adam and Eve in the garden about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His lies perpetuate the curse of our fallen world which enslaves mankind by a system of works and performance. His lies prey on our root insecurities of FEAR and our false securities of PRIDE. His lies foster a self-centered, others-controlling mindset which pits individuals, groups, nations – and even churches – against each other. The most abhorrent part of this lie is somehow Satan has deluded most of the world into thinking the culprit is God! After all, what is 'religion' and 'church' but another system of works and rituals, things we must DO to be accepted (hopefully) by our Creator!



Ask the common man on the street how to get to heaven and he'll tell you the common answer, "obey the Ten Commandments" – i.e. be *good* enough. Talk about the ultimate Performance Trap!

When we believe we have to perform for God to accept us, the dissonance either produces a lifestyle motivated by guilt or a lifestyle of rationalization and denial. Neither leads us toward God. God help us. We desperately need saved. Like Private Ryan standing before dying Captain Miller, somehow we've concluded Jesus's final outstretched words on the cross were not "It is FINISHED!" but rather "EARN this!" This insidious misconception seeps even into our seemingly innocent Christmas traditions. Santa Claus is the perfect decoy for the devil – a character in a red suit accompanied by creatures with horns and cloven feet to promote the world's most materialistic holiday!

Salvation by works? No greater lie has ever been conceived.

## NOTES

"You better watch out, better not cry, better not pout, I'm telling you why, Santa Claus is comin' to town. He's making a list and checking it twice. Gonna find out who's naughty and nice, Santa Claus is comin' to town. He sees you when you're sleepin'. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good So be good for goodness sake!.."

- Children's Christmas Carol



## PRACTICE

Watch this powerful scene from “Good Will Hunting.”



Write about what you see and why we are watching this. Then, discuss at your tables.

## Post Practice Review

What is the effect of living with guilt, especially when it's false guilt?

What was Will's core problem? What helped him break free?

What self-limiting beliefs are holding you back?

What would breaking free mean to you?

What would it mean to your loved ones?

What impact would it have on your circle of influence?

“...Then they inquired, ‘What must we do to perform the works of God?’ Jesus replied, ‘This is the work of God: to believe in the One He has sent.’”

- Jesus (John 6:28-29, BSB)

Do NOT miss what follows – this is HUGE:

The LIE you are a NObody until you DO something to be a SOMEbody? It's not your fault.

The LIE behind the Performance Trap, Addiction Approval, the Blame Game, and the Shame Trap? It's not your fault.

The LIE of pseudo-identity? It's not your fault.

The LIE church is about becoming a *nice, dutiful man*? It's not your fault.

The LIE spirituality is about how busy you are as a woman in church? It's not your fault.

The LIE noses and numbers at church is what makes a pastor successful? It's not your fault.

The LIE you have to (or CAN) be good enough to earn God's acceptance? It's not your fault.

The LIE God is like Santa Claus? And salvation is by works? It's not your fault.

The LIE of the world's backwards order for life's 3 Big Questions and all its misleading answers? It's not your fault.

It's not your fault.

It's not your fault.

It's not your fault.

God, help us see the truth. God, save us and set us free.

## NOTES

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"

- Jesus (John 8:31-33, NIV)



**PRACTICE**

Write out **WORLD** and **WORD** in the space below in your own handwriting.

Look carefully, and then critically answer this question: “Literally, what’s the difference between the two? Don’t over-think it. Be like a kindergartner. Write your answer in the space below.

**Post Practice Review**

Discuss at your tables. What is the difference?

How does this Scripture from 1 John 2 sharpen your understanding?

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world... For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

- The Apostle John (1 John 2:15-16, NASB)



What's the difference between WORLD and WORD? Literally?

*It's one 'L of a difference!* And the one 'L represents the LIES of the world system about where to find LIFE.

I remember a test in high school where one of my favorite teachers wrote out a math problem on the board and told the class to solve it. "As soon as you get the answer, turn it in and you can leave and go to lunch early." For awhile even the math genius in the room was frustrated as he broke down the equation and wrestled through it. But then I remember seeing him smiling as he got up, turned in his answer and left. The teacher looked at his answer and smiled too. The rest of us stayed until the bell and then sheepishly turned in our work, knowing we didn't have the right answer but hoping for partial credit. We all caught up with our friend in the cafeteria who asked, "What took you so long?"

"Are you kidding? That test was IMPOSSIBLE unless you're a genius like you," I replied.

"It was a trick question," he said, smiling again. "It was a false proposition. There was no answer to it. It was a two-dimensional equation trying to solve for a three-dimensional point of reference."

We stood there dumb-founded, and then even more sheepishly realized we all had been duped. Somewhere within we knew something wasn't right about the test, but we all thought we must be missing something, and kept trying to solve a problem which couldn't be solved. We didn't want to LOOK stupid.

We wanted to be a SOMEbody. So we fell for a trap and failed to see we were searching for an "X" which wasn't there.

When we conform to the pattern of this world looking for the answers and meaning of life, we fall into the same trap. The world functions only in the two dimensions of time and space. If Pascal and Solomon are right about God setting eternity on our hearts, the answer is not of this world. We must be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

There must be another dimension of life we are missing.

## NOTES

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."  
- The Apostle Paul (Romans 12:2 NIV)



"I think we have lost the old knowledge that...(this) life is overrated...Our ancestors believed in two worlds, and understood this to be the solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short one. We are the first generations of (our culture) that actually expected to find happiness here on earth, and our search for it has caused—such unhappiness. The reason: If you do not believe in another, higher world, if you believe only in the flat material world around you, if you believe that this is your only chance at happiness—if that is what you believe, then you are not (just) disappointed when the world does not give you a good measure of its riches, you are despairing."

Peggy Noonan, *You'd Cry Too If It Happened To You*

## PRACTICE

Watch this clip from *The Matrix*, one of the best metaphors for describing the world we live in. As you watch, put yourselves in the shoes of Neo and ask yourself the question Morpheus asks him – which pill would you choose? Why?



Write. Discuss with your fellow builders.

Why do people choose the blue pill? Why do you think people choose the red pill? Why not?

Read the quote on the opposite page and the one below.

Where on your journey are you in your thinking?

“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.” Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

Jesus (John 6::27-29, NIV)

## NOTES

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened... They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator."

— The Apostle Paul  
— (Romans 1:20-25 NIV)

Read the edited transcript below from the clip we just watched, where the New Testament term *kosmos* (Greek, lit. "world system") is substituted for the term "matrix". used in the movie.

*"I can see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees because he is expecting to wake up. Ironically, this is not far from the truth... Let me tell you why you're here. You're here because you know something. What you know you can't explain. But you feel it. You've felt it your entire life. That there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is but it's there, like a splinter in your mind driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me. Do you know what I'm talking about?... Do you want to know what IT is? The *kosmos* is everywhere. It is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth...that you are a slave... Like everyone else you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind... Unfortunately, no one can be told what the *kosmos* is. You have to see it for yourself. This is your last chance. After this there is no turning back. You take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.... Remember, all I'm offering is the truth, nothing more..."*

## The Matrix

If this is where you find yourself on your Builder's Journey, this is a Moment of Truth for you. A Moment of Truth is when you have a revelation, an awakening, an "aha" – and then you are confronted with a choice. What will you choose? If you do nothing, it will be like taking the "blue pill," and after awhile you will forget the Moment of Truth even happened.

If you choose to act, you will increase your understanding of the world we live in, but you will also increase your dissonance unless also choose to act on what the truth shows you.

Do you *want* to know the truth? Do you *want* to be free?

If so, let's continue.

At what age do we figure out the meaning of life? At what age do we finally answer the questions, who am I? And, why am I here? Well, time's up. It's time for us to stop asking ourselves, as if the meaning of life is to be found within ourselves. And, it's time for us to stop asking others, asking around, as if the meaning of life is to be found somewhere along a pick-and-choose smorgasbord of opinions.

It's time to ask an expert. It's time to ask someone who knows. But, who knows? Jesus knows. And John, the write of the Gospel, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," wants us to know that Jesus knows.

Jesus knows a lot about life. He is life. (John 14:6) He gives life. (John 10:28) Life is in him and him alone. (John 1:4)

But what do we mean by "life"? Let's ask this question another way. What's the meaning of life? What is life, and what's if all about?

Jesus tells us that real life, eternal life, is knowing God the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom the Father has sent. (John 17:3) It is living in a deep, personal, intimate relationship with God in Jesus, in which he continuously pours out his life and his love into us forever.

Jesus tells us that he alone can give eternal life. (John 10:28)

And, he tells us that he came to give us eternal life, so we would live and live abundantly. (John 10:10)

John has written an entire Gospel "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:21) Jesus has given John eternal life. John is living with Jesus, and he wants us to live with Jesus, too.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

What are Jesus' credentials?

How do we know that life is in him and him alone?

## NOTES

"On the one hand is the assumption that...eating, sleeping, growing, learning, breeding, and the rest, constitute the total sum of things; that in worldly prosperity and well-being lies the source of all meaning and value. On the other hand is the awareness...that the thoughts and actions of every hour are molding a soul which is on its way to eternity."

- Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind*



## NOTES

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men."

- The Apostle John, (*John 1:1-4, NASB*)

We know that life is in him and him alone because it always has been!

In the opening chapter of his Gospel, John presents us with a copy of Jesus' resume.

First the introduction. John begins his Gospel with the phrase, "in the beginning." Wait a minute! Where have we heard that before? It's in the very first verse of the Bible. No doubt John wants his readers, from his first readers all the way down to you and me, to recall Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning." But "in the beginning," what? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But John throws us a curve ball. He changes it. This time it's not, "in the beginning, God." This time it's, "in the beginning," someone else! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."

Who is this new person, "the Word"? He is none other than Jesus the Son of God. John wants us to know up front that Jesus was "in the beginning." Jesus, God's Son, existed in eternity past, prior to the creation of life. There's more. Jesus "was with God." As God's Son, he was with God the Father in the beginning. And Jesus "was God." As God's Son, Jesus is and always has been and always will be God. He is one of the three persons of the Godhead. God is one God of three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (We call this tri-unity of God "the Trinity.") Jesus is the Son. Jesus, the Son, is God. (John 1:3)

Now that's a pretty heavy load for an opening line, but John is just getting started. Now that he has introduced Jesus, he is ready to present Jesus' credentials.

Jesus is the source of all life. He always has been.

Life is more than two-dimensional, it's more than just time and space on this Earth.

What's missing is the "Z" axis of life – a third spiritual dimension – which is the *zoe* life found only in Jesus.

John is clear. "All things were made by him." And just to make sure that there's no misunderstanding, he repeats it: "In fact, not even one thing that was made was made without him." Now our minds wander back to Genesis 1:1 again.

What are you saying, John? "I'm saying that it was all Jesus! Genesis 1, Genesis 2. It was all Jesus!"

John is speaking directly to us. He is saying, in effect, "Remember when Genesis 1:1 says, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth?'" Yes, we reply. "That was Jesus!"

"And remember when it says, 'God made man in his own image. In the image of God he created him?'" Yes. "That was Jesus!" (Gen 1:27) Go on ....

"And when it says, 'Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul.'?" Yes. "That was Jesus!" (Gen 2:7)

"And when it says, 'So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.'?" Yes. "That was Jesus, too!" (Gen 2:21-22)

"And when it says twice, that the LORD God took the man whom he had formed and put him in the garden of Eden with God?" Yes. "That was Jesus!" (Gen 2:8, 15)

It is John's conclusion. And now it is our conclusion. Jesus is the source of all life. He always has been.

So now comes the big headline (to shift metaphors). Page one. Top center. Large letters. Bold caps.



## NOTES

Trinity: "What is he doing?"  
Morpheus: "He's beginning to believe."

- - The MATRIX



## NOTES

How do we know that life is in him and him alone?

We know that life is in him and him alone because it always has been!

We've read his resume. We've gone over his credentials.

He is the source of all life.

So when Jesus explains to us the meaning of life, we should pay attention.

He knows what he's talking about.

He made life.

He IS the *zoe* life.

The life is in him and him alone.

And he gives us eternal life. We must come to Jesus, and stay with Jesus, for life.

How do you come to Jesus? Like Simon (Tugwell) says, it's more of a matter of letting Jesus come to you.

Jesus has been looking for you.

He has been patiently waiting for you, knocking on your door.

*"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."*

- Revelation 3:20-21, NASB

What will you choose? Jesus IS the "red pill."

May your *zoe* life begin today. Your only regret will be not doing it sooner, but you will discover God can redeem even this.

Let's go. There's a lot more to learn.

"So long as we imagine it is we who have to look for God, we must often lose heart. But it is the other way about—He is looking for us."

- Simon Tugwell



## PRACTICE

Write about what jumped out at you as you learned about life and Jesus. Why?  
What was different than what you thought before?

Discuss at your tables with your fellow builders.

Have someone from each table broadcast to the group something they talked about.

## Post Practice Review

What about *zoe* or Jesus do you want to learn more about? Why?

Tell me more.



