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Scribnock, Angelica. "The Answer Isn't Jesus." *Love is Moving* 32 (March-April 2019): 12.

# THE ANSWER ISN'T JESUS

Words by Angelica Scribnock

**I**f there was one word to describe why you are a Christian, what would it be?"

My youth leader asked this in a small group discussion at one of my high school youth retreats. For those who don't know what a youth retreat is, picture a handful of adults taking a group of energetic students to a camp and spending a weekend eating junk food, getting no sleep and playing gross games (like sticking your face into pudding with live worms or eating crickets), while at the same time growing closer to God and each other. Retreats were always a highlight of my year, and really did challenge me in my faith.

At this particular retreat, I remember my youth leader's question made me stop and think about why I was a Christian. Just like me, the majority of my small group consisted of students who also came from Christian families and grew up in the church.

Everyone went quiet; the question unsettled the whole group.

When I look back at this memory now, I wonder... Why the awkward silence? Shouldn't I have known why I believed what I believed? Even being surrounded by Christians, I had never been challenged or asked why I myself was one.

Regularly attending church, serving, and going to any event or youth program available, I had accepted the 'Christian norm' as my lifestyle and had never even stopped to question it. So, when my youth leader asked this, I had to figure out my main reason for choosing to live a life to honour God. Unlike most small group questions, the answer was not just 'Jesus' or 'Read your Bible and pray.' Each person had a personal answer.

What was my one-word response?

After poking at the grass unsure of what to say, a word came to my mind.

"Purpose," I said, breaking the silence.

I knew God gave me a reason to be here on earth. I can wake up knowing I am loved and intentionally created.

Now, after growing older and gaining more life experience, I understand that everything I strive for apart from God can never bring lasting joy: friendships don't always last, possessions lose their value, and even academic achievements should not define me. For when I focus on people's opinions and try to be perfect, I run myself down and lose the joy of community and creativity God gave me.

Ecclesiastes 2:16 states, "the wise dies just like the fool" and likewise for the rich and the poor. This is our earthly end, unless Christ returns in our lifetime.

So, what does last? Why does the way I live my life matter?

Ecclesiastes 12:13b (ESV) states that the purpose of life is to "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." When I follow and obey God, I fill the role He created me for. God chose to love me when He created me, and I choose to reciprocate His love by obeying Him.

My youth leader showed his love for God by helping my small group understand our personal relationship with Christ. I am thankful he challenged me to grow deeper in my understanding of why I am a Christian, because I now know my answer.

"Purpose."

"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

"If there was one word to describe why you are a Christian, what would it be?"



Angelica Scribnock  
Toronto, ON  
@IAN ESPINOSA