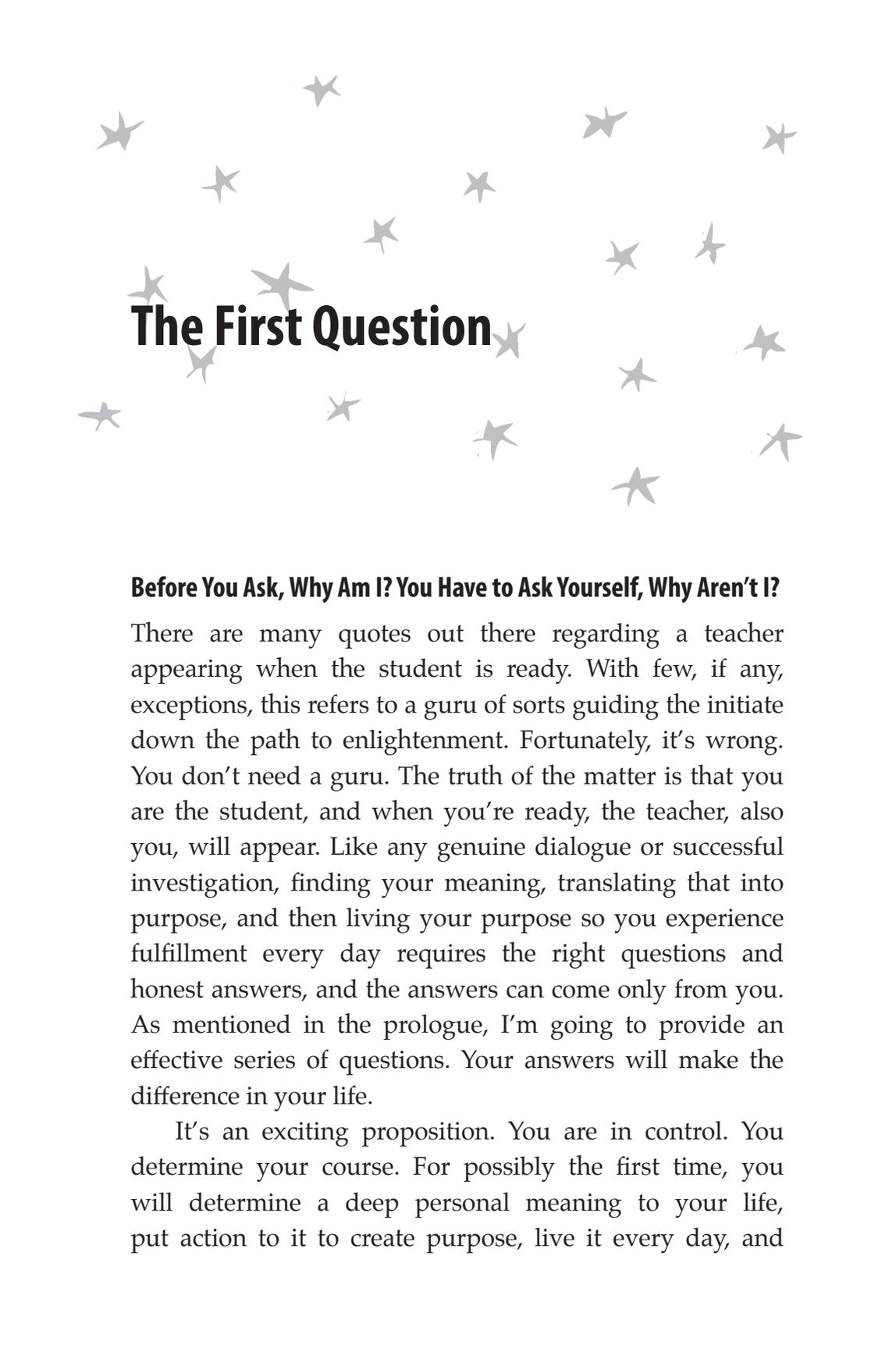




## Why Aren't I?

*Before you can look inside, it's important to understand the external forces working against you every day, steering you toward the many false gods of fulfillment. Among these are religion and spirituality, the expectations of your family and friends, and the material standards set by the media and the world's marketing machines.*



# The First Question

## **Before You Ask, Why Am I? You Have to Ask Yourself, Why Aren't I?**

There are many quotes out there regarding a teacher appearing when the student is ready. With few, if any, exceptions, this refers to a guru of sorts guiding the initiate down the path to enlightenment. Fortunately, it's wrong. You don't need a guru. The truth of the matter is that you are the student, and when you're ready, the teacher, also you, will appear. Like any genuine dialogue or successful investigation, finding your meaning, translating that into purpose, and then living your purpose so you experience fulfillment every day requires the right questions and honest answers, and the answers can come only from you. As mentioned in the prologue, I'm going to provide an effective series of questions. Your answers will make the difference in your life.

It's an exciting proposition. You are in control. You determine your course. For possibly the first time, you will determine a deep personal meaning to your life, put action to it to create purpose, live it every day, and

experience consistent fulfillment. The fulfillment isn't based on achieving financial independence, mastering Internet marketing, placing ads, "creating abundance," turning your life into a series of extended vacations, or attempting other actions you may or may not be able or want to achieve. If you can read and think for yourself, consider questions, and answer them honestly until you've driven down to what you're really about, what moves you to joy or anger, that infinitely dense singularity within you that makes you *you*, then you can do this. There's nothing to buy or sell. Your only obstacle is you.

First, you have to put down the story.

Wait. What? What story?

You may be unaware you've been reading a story every day of your life until now—the story of your culture and its externally derived values and beliefs and goals, the story designed to keep you plodding along the beaten path, contributing to a machine over which you exert zero control and to which you make next-to-zero meaningful contribution. It's not because you can't contribute. You *can*, but we're all too wrapped up in striving for or maintaining external standards established long ago, ingrained in each of us by our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents—the internal tattoos of a modern tribe.

The American Dream—now twisted and bloated beyond recognition and exported throughout the world—has become the economic version of original sin.

The story you've been forced to read—by your family, friends, the media, the marketers, the retailers, and religion—is the story we all grow up with. It's a churning amalgam of material success pursuits, eternal salvation, hellfire, celebrity worship, lifestyle envy, salving bromides,

wedding days, dismaying divorce, apocalyptic distraction, fear-based economics, and age-old wisdom about embracing life's simple things (meant to stem the rising panic inside). It's a story designed to get you from self-consciousness to the grave without making waves in whatever culture you're born into, to be sure you propagate the species (to the tune of 2.1+ children per female), contribute to the economy, and maintain the proper level of civilization, with the promise of life after death, so long as you meekly follow the rules.

So you follow the path and hold yourself to accepted, external standards that cruelly offer little chance of real fulfillment. Even in your reptilian core, you know it's unlikely you'll ever soar to the material heights where happiness supposedly awaits, gain the celebrity you're told is so important to pursue, achieve enlightenment and eternal youth through hyperintense exercise, or receive a supernatural reward while you're alive or dead.

Sound familiar?

To me, our story seems like the most evil form of cynicism. You're born. You live. You procreate. You hope to live forever after you die. This can't be it, right? *Right?* Why aren't we living meaningfully *while we're alive?*

I ask you, I beg you, to put down your culture's story and look around. Ask yourself how it's going. Could you ever have enough money to buy everything ever made? How long does that new car smell fill the void that religion and alcohol and marriage and parenthood can't manage? Ask yourself if you're as happy as you want to be. Would a successful blog with a healthy comment section and 15,106 all-powerful "Likes" nurture every fiber of your being? Ask yourself what the hell you're doing with your life. Why are you unthinkingly pursuing what you're told is important?

Why do you accept it? What are you teaching your children? If you're active on social media but avoid texting while driving, watch enriching television while keeping up with current events, contribute to the latest Internet memes, smile at babies, and by external standards are "successful," why do you feel unfulfilled?

Let me answer this right now. You feel unfulfilled because you've tried to find your meaning and purpose outside yourself. You've looked for it under rocks, in ancient books, between the lines of technical specifications, within the right combination of ingredients, or by hacking your life. You've tried to buy your fulfillment. You've complied with what you're supposed to want, so you've tried materialism and narcissism, but your fourteen-inch pillow top mattress and your new haircut and your clever T-shirt and your interval training didn't do it for you.

You *know* there must be more. There is, but the *more* in life is hidden by the pop culture noise, numbing routine, a fat dose of laziness, and an apparently worldwide unwillingness to think.

What we need is a new story, a new plot, with each of us as our own author and architect.

The answers are within you, not without. They're small and elemental. You could not have known them when you were a child because you didn't have the necessary experience or knowledge of the world. Understandably and regardless of age, to this point you've accepted what your parents, teachers, and friends believe, what they value, what they'd learned, *because you are a part of your culture*—like grass in the ground. So be it. Now you owe it to yourself to put an end to it and build the framework for a meaningful, purposeful, fulfilling life.

Can you do it? Of course you can.

The student (you) is ready.

The teacher (you) will now appear.