

According to Douglas Adams' cult sci-fi comedy 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,' researchers from a pan-dimensional, hyper-intelligent race of beings, construct 'Deep Thought,' the second the second greatest computer of all time and space, to calculate the Ultimate Answer to Life, the Universe, and Everything.

After seven and a half million years of pondering the question, 'Deep Thought' provides the answer – 42.

The researchers are frankly disgusted with such a seemingly unintelligible answer: "'Forty-two!' 'Is that all you've got to show for seven and a half million years' work?'"

"'I checked it very thoroughly,' the computer replies, 'and that quite definitely is the answer. I think the problem, to be quite honest with you, is that you've never actually known what the question is.'" Isn't that precisely the problem with our world today?

It may seem that the majority of people today aren't interested in knowing what the meaning of life is, but I think they are; even if they're not really sure what to ask, and who to ask.

The problem is that when they ask the question, because they're not tuned in to God, they answer the question themselves.

And that answer is usually that 'things,' such as money, possessions, and power, constitute the meaning of life.

At least they did until the failure of the banking system, and the double-dip recession hit us.

Not that everyone wants to have unlimited power or money; but just enough power to be in charge of their life, and enough money to cushion themselves against the storms of life.

I guess that explains why lots of people play the Lottery every week, and the popularity of reality TV shows like 'The X-Factor,' when one can – or so it seems – become an overnight celebrity, with all the trappings that go with it.

I think a lot of people want those things, to a greater or lesser extent, because they think they'll find the answer to the meaning of life, and achieve some sort of immortality through them.

The quest for all these things is actually a put off hearing the answer to the 'elephant in the room' question, because most people don't want to get a truthful answer to: 'What happens to me when I die?'

But we shouldn't worry about death being nothingness, in which we get swallowed up, and snuffed out forever.

Our reading from the Book of Wisdom tells us that death isn't part of God's plan: "For God [it says] created human beings to be immortal, he made them as an image of his own nature. Death came into the world only through the Devil's envy." [Wis. 2: 23 – 24](#)

His envy, that we're made in the image and likeness of God's One and Only Son, Jesus.

So, not only does he try to destroy the Son of God on the Cross, and seems to triumph; but through that one death he thinks he'll annihilate humanity, which is created in the image and likeness of Jesus. But he didn't succeed; because, as Paul says: "[Jesus] was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him." [2 Cor. 13: 4](#)

Therefore, the answer to the meaning of life is to be found in the power of God, manifested in the utter weakness, and degradation of God, in Christ, on the Cross.

It's a power that doesn't seek to control us, and make us slavish automata; but one that seeks to set us free, and refashion us into the image of Jesus.

This power is seen powerfully at work in the Gospel today where both stories are about fear and faith, and the power of Jesus to lead us from one to the other.

Jesus has crossed over by boat to the small town of Capernaum when: “A leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet, pleading fervently with him. earnestly with him, ‘My little daughter is dying,’ he said. ‘Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live.’” Mk. 5: 22 – 23

His daughter’s 12 years old – almost old enough in that culture to get married, so she’s on the verge of a new life; and yet death is striking her down.

We can imagine in our mind’s-eye Jairus, the distraught father, and his agonised household, with hope slipping away like sand in a sieve until word of Jesus’ arrival reaches them.

But on His way to the house where, as we already suspect He’ll find a corpse, Jesus is touched by a woman who’s been bleeding internally for 12 years.

One can only imagine the suffering this woman’s gone through, and the suffering Jairus is experiencing at the thought of his daughter’s young life being snuffed out.

Both of these people are helpless, and powerless, in the face of such pain, and suffering.

Both the woman and Jairus are desperate; yet, deep down, they’re not in despair, because they have faith that Jesus will save them.

When life crowds in with all its pressures, there’s still room for us to creep up behind Jesus, as the woman did – if that’s all we feel we can do – and reach out to touch Him, in that odd mixture of fear, and faith that characterises so much of our Christian discipleship.

So was it Jesus’ power that rescued the woman, and raised the young girl, or the faith of the woman and Jairus?

Clearly it was Jesus’ power; but He says to the woman: “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over.” Mk. 5: 34

The answer must be that faith, though in itself is powerless, is the channel through which Jesus’ power can work.

He’s not a magician doing conjuring tricks by some secret power for an amazed but uninvolved audience.

He is God’s Son, the one through whom the Living God is remaking us, and His world.

And faith, however much fear and trembling may accompany it, is the first sign of that remaking, that renewal, that new life.

Having faith in Jesus because: “Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.”

1 Pet. 1: 21

He who is the only answer to the meaning of life.