

The Biggest Questions in Life – Part 6: Does Everything Happen for a Reason?

There is a belief among many people that everything happens for a reason. Sporting events, elections, personal decisions, failures, rejections, acceptance... you name it, and it happened for a reason.

I remember a man once confided in me about the time his fiancée broke off a marriage engagement. As it turned out, his fiancée developed numerous health problems years later – problems he did not have to cope with as a spouse. He considered the breakup a blessing. In addition, he met another woman, married her, and was happy. The breaking of the engagement allowed the man to avoid major struggles, and marry the right person.

The concept of everything happens for a reason is similar to another common cliché: when one door closes, another door opens. If you do not get a job, then a better job offer will eventually come. Engagement broken? Then you will inevitably meet the person you are supposed to marry instead.

Many people also believe in the concept of “what goes around comes around.” This means that the result of someone’s actions will inevitably come back to that person, and affect them in a similar manner. If you treat someone well or do them a favor, then someone else will do you a favor. Of course, if you treat others poorly, then bad things will happen to you.

People also believe they see signs, leading them toward or away from certain decisions. Perhaps, on the day of a job interview something goes wrong at home. Then you arrive at the employer’s business and cannot find a parking place. The interviewer is running late. The chair where you sit during the interview is broken. All of these lead some people to see a sign that either the job was not meant to be or they should not pursue the position. Some look for signs in relationships. A date where “everything goes wrong” might be a sign that the person you are with might not be right for you.

These clichés serve multiple purposes in our society. The foremost is to keep people happy. If someone who is down on their luck knows that a better opportunity is just ahead, they can more easily move past the emotional letdowns they just experienced, and anticipate future opportunities. Secondly, it keeps people from giving up and inspires them to persevere. Opportunities seldom come to people who sit home and watch television all day. Third, it prevents people from believing

that life is just a series of random events, and they are merely the victim of a capricious universe. Fourth, if people believe that what goes around comes around, perhaps it will make them better citizens and treat others better, regardless of their own personal predicaments.

Yet, all of these beliefs have an even greater common thread among them. Someone or something is behind these signs and experiences. The Earth and the universe are not alive, and cannot lead anyone to anything. Someone or something is attempting to direct us to the right path. There must be a greater intelligence or a greater power at work here, guiding us through life. What is that greater intelligence? Just as we all strive to interpret the signs in our lives, we all interpret that powerful guidance differently. Yet, most people believe it is there nonetheless.

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