

Unravelling life's greatest mysteries

Mark Pavilon



The world is a crazy place at times.

And we're often left searching for answers. I think it's time to answer some of those age-old questions to help further the human condition. Or at least provide some food for thought.

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

The chicken, sort of. The archaeopteryx likely came first, and arrived on Earth roughly 145 million years ago. It's believed to be the prehistoric ancestor of the chicken and had feathers but a reptilian body. The chicken's direct relative is likely the wild red jungle fowl, common to India, which was first domesticated by man roughly 5,000 years ago.

To follow a strictly scientific train of thought, all life on Earth came from LUCA ? the Last Universal Common Ancestor. It's a single-cell organism that evolved from strands of nucleic acids. Believe it or not, the genetic code in LUCA is in all of us ? you and I included. It makes up our DNA. This is essential for reproduction and it allows for variations in offspring.

So, while we all started out as microscopic blobs swimming around in the primordial ooze a few billion years ago, we've grown up. And so has everything else on our home world.

LUCA?spawned more advanced creatures and once they were more fully formed, grew and had babies. So they never really came from eggs.

There you have it! The chicken ??or a reasonable facsimile thereof ? came first.

Since it's been around so long, I?think that's why we all compare it to other meats that we can't place. When in doubt, say it tastes like chicken.

Vive chicken wings, chicken nuggets, fried chicken, chicken soup, chicken fried rice ...

And no, the eggs you buy from the store will not turn into chickens!

Do nice guys finish last?

Generally speaking, yes, we do.

There's a reason why nice guys are, well, nice. They have to compensate for certain shortcomings by being extra nice. It could also be a sense of inner peace and being one with the universe. Ear-to-ear smiles help.

The reason I say this is when you ask women about certain males, if they don't rank on the attractive meter, they're deemed ?nice.??It's pretty much the same as ?let's be friends.?

During my journalism education, I?was told, rather bluntly, that I would not be suited for an on-camera career in broadcast. The reason was simple ? I?wasn't good looking enough. My hopes of being a Chippendale model summarily shattered, I?turned my attention to more cerebral endeavors. But I?never lost my sense of humour and slightly rebellious nature.

There's nothing wrong with being a ?nice guy.? And it doesn't mean that nice guys are doomed to failure and must finish in the

bottom half. They can succeed and achieve greatness. So, have hope all you nice guys out there!

What is the meaning of life?

Many people over the millennia have tried to answer this seemingly impossible question.

I always liked the response from author Douglas Adams, who wrote the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series. Put simply, it's 42. Forty-two is a sphenic number; a primary pseudoperfect number and a Catalan number. The number 42 appears in many contexts of Christianity and there are 42 principles of the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead. The Gutenberg Bible contained 42 lines per page. The list goes on.

While that's a great answer to this question, it is, sadly, incorrect.

By studying ancient religious doctrines; reading psychological texts and listening to Robin Williams's ad-libs, I've come up with a rather simple explanation:

Being nice!

Did I mention that there's a reason nice guys finish last?

We have no control over our own creation or how we entered the world. But we have total control over what we do with our lives. So, everything we do from the time we learn to walk and talk, has meaning, one way or another. And our freedom of choice allows us to decide how to be meaningful.

And by being nice, cordial, amiable, considerate, pleasant, kind and just fine and dandy, we can make positive contributions to society.

Passing on these delightful genes makes the world a better place, don't you think? Our planet needs more wonderful people and can do without those nasty, unpleasant types.

And this leads me to answering the next toughest question of all time:

Why am I here?

For the reason mentioned above.

We're here to contribute. We're here to give more than we take; to love more than we hate; to improve more than we destroy. In other words, we're here to be, and I've said it already, nice!

So, it doesn't really matter if we're destined for greatness, mediocrity or obscurity ? the path we carve and those we touch along the way are what matter.

Now that I've dealt with those heavy questions, I'll leave you with answers to some simpler puzzling inquiries.

Being inside during a thunderstorm is the safest place to be.

Identical twins have different finger prints because they're formed semi-randomly in the fetus.

Yes, there is such a thing as a fish out of water ??many species can breathe, even walk, on land.

Plants can live forever.

And yes, men do have cellulite, just in different places.

I'll let you in on a little secret ??there's a very simple explanation as to why everything exists. It has something to do with random fluctuations in the quantum vacuum. In other words, it just is.

I hope I've cleared things up.