

How Far Is Forever?

By Bill Scott



Perhaps the existence of the word 'forever' tells us less about our vocabulary than it does about our nature. We have a name for something our minds cannot perceive.

Why?

There may be no word more familiar—or more mysterious—than the word *forever*

We use it every day without giving it a second thought.

"I will love you forever."

"This is taking forever."

"Forever and a day."

"You can see forever."

"To the end of time."

The word 'forever' appears in poetry, literature, music, everyday conversation, and is found in every major religion. It slips effortlessly into our vocabulary as though its meaning were obvious. In comments including the word "masterpiece", in the movie 'Blue Hawaii' Elvis sang, "Forever My Darling" and the female population of America threw their panties at him.

Yet if someone asked us to define it, most of us would struggle with an explanation.

We might substitute words like *eternal*, *everlasting*, or *infinite*. But these aren't definitions. They're simply other words pointing toward the same mystery. Saying that forever means "eternal" is like saying light is like "brightness." We've changed the label without explaining the idea because there is no explanation.

The truth is, forever may be one of the few concepts the human mind is fundamentally incapable of understanding. In the same way it's highly unlikely a Neanderthal man would pass a physics exam.

Our brains evolved to think in beginnings and endings.

Every story has a first page and a last page.

Every road has a starting point and a destination.

Every life has a birth and a death.

Everything we experience exists within boundaries.

Even when our largest numbers eventually come to an end. We can always add one more.

Forever is different.

It has no edge.

No finish line.

No final chapter.

It cannot be counted, measured, or exhausted. Whether we're talking about distance or duration, forever extends beyond every point we can imagine. The instant we think we've reached it, it continues beyond our thoughts.

Perhaps that is why forever has become intertwined with time itself. We often use the words interchangeably. We speak of "the end of time" as though time were a highway stretching endlessly into the distance. But what if forever isn't more time?

What if forever begins where time ends?

Modern physics has raised the possibility that time itself had a beginning. If that is true, then time cannot be eternal. It is part of the universe, not something outside it. That raises an astonishing possibility: forever may not be an extension of time but the absence of it.

Let that last sentence settle before going on.

Theologians have wrestled with this for thousands of years. If God exists outside time, then He doesn't wait for tomorrow. He doesn't remember yesterday. Every moment is simply...present.

We can say the words.

We can imagine the idea.

But we cannot truly experience it.

Perhaps that's why the concept has inspired so much poetry and so little certainty.

The word *forever* reminds us that there are realities larger than our minds can contain. Just as a fish cannot imagine a mountain, perhaps creatures bound by time cannot fully imagine what lies beyond it.

Yet we keep trying:

- We write songs about forever
- We promise forever to those we love
- We hope for forever
- We fear forever

And perhaps that longing itself is worth considering.

Maybe the fact that we possess a word for something we cannot comprehend suggests that forever is more than a human invention.

Perhaps it is a whisper of a reality our minds recognize but cannot yet fully grasp.

After all, the horizon existed long before anyone reached it.

At What Point Did Intelligence First Appear On Earth In A Lifeform?

That's one of the oldest and most profound questions in biology and philosophy, and the honest answer is: “We don't know”. Much depends on what we mean by *intelligence*.

If intelligence means the ability to process information and respond to the environment, then intelligence is nearly as old as life itself.

The first living cells, appearing roughly 3.5–4 billion years ago, could detect chemicals, move toward nutrients, avoid harmful conditions, repair themselves, and reproduce. They had no brains, but they weren't passive. They made "decisions" through biochemical networks. In that broad sense, intelligence began with the first cell.

If intelligence means learning from experience, the answer comes later. Even simple organisms such as some worms can modify their behavior based on previous events. This suggests that memory—and a primitive form of learning—evolved hundreds of millions of years before complex brains.

If intelligence means reasoning, planning, abstract thought, language, or self-awareness, then we're talking about a much more recent development. Humans represent the most elaborate known example, although many other animals show remarkable cognitive abilities.

Octopus solve puzzles, Crow make and use tools, Dolphin recognize themselves in mirrors, and Chimpanzee plan, cooperate, and communicate in sophisticated ways.

What's particularly interesting is that intelligence doesn't appear to have arrived all at once. It seems to have emerged gradually:

- **Sensing** the environment

- **Remembering** previous experiences
- **Learning** from those experiences
- **Predicting** what might happen next
- **Planning** actions before taking them
- **Reflecting** on oneself and others

Each step built upon the last over hundreds of thousands of years.

The question also raises a deeper philosophical issue. Is intelligence something that suddenly "appears," like flipping on a light switch? Or is it more like dawn, where no one can point to the exact moment night becomes day?

I tend to think the latter is more consistent with what we observe in evolution. Intelligence seems to exist on a continuum rather than in distinct categories.

That leads to an even more intriguing question: **Did intelligence evolve because life became more complex, or did life become more complex because intelligence—even in its simplest form—was present from the very beginning?**

If the first cell had no capacity whatsoever to acquire and use information, it's difficult to see how natural selection could have started. In that sense, one could argue that the seed of intelligence may be as ancient as life itself, growing in complexity over billions of years rather than appearing suddenly at a single moment.

Yet, with all this being said, the human mind is still incapable of coming up with a satisfying answer regarding the time or the distance between Now and Forever?

Imagine awakening on Earth with no prior knowledge of existence.

No childhood

No parents

No language

No memories

No understanding of time, distance, hunger, fear, love, or even your own reflection.

Your eyes open, and for the very first time, light floods your consciousness. Every color is new. Every sound is a mystery. A breeze across your skin has no name because nothing has a name. Even the ground beneath your feet is an experience without comparison.

I don't know about you, but I am not all that imaginative. I can imagine seeing something I've never seen before, but I cannot imagine seeing *everything* for the first time.

Now imagine another human being walking toward you.

According to the Genesis account, Adam had never seen another person. He had no concept of male or female, friendship or romance, family or reproduction. There were no stories, no instincts shaped by culture, no memories to guide his reactions.

His first impression of Eve might well have been, "What in the world is that?"

Or, to put it less formally:

"What the hell do I do with that?"

The humor hides a serious point.

We assume Adam immediately understood Eve because we already know what a woman is. We know what people are. We understand attraction, companionship, and relationships because we've spent a lifetime surrounded by them.

Adam had none of that.

Everything—trees, birds, rivers, stars, animals, and finally Eve—would have been utterly beyond comparison. Every moment would have been a first.

Perhaps that is why Genesis describes Adam naming the animals before Eve appears. In a sense, he was learning the world one discovery at a time, building a framework of understanding from absolutely nothing.

Maybe the greatest miracle wasn't simply that Adam was created.

Maybe it was that consciousness itself awakened in a universe that had never before existed in his mind.

We've all wondered what heaven might be like.

Perhaps a better question is this:

What did it feel like to experience *the first morning*? Then there's the burning question that keeps coming back. What happened before that?