**#261 “The Purpose and Meaning of Life”**

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Many people in today’s world don’t even bother to ask the question, “What is the meaning of life?” It is not considered relevant anymore to even think hard enough to bother to critically evaluate what we are here for and what responsibility we have on this earth. Even though the conscience, the creation, the cross, and the Scripture all point clearly to the Creator, people ignore Him and thus miss their purpose in this life. Some try to create a purpose for themselves through career, various forms of success or fame, or just pure pleasure-seeking. Some believe that if they just cross everything off of their bucket list of things that they want to do before they die that they will have lived a full life. But this is plain ignorance and foolishness to believe that life can be full of joy without fellowship with Christ. As Ecclesiastes 2:25 says, “For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?”

Ecclesiastes 5:18 says, “Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.” Ecclesiastes 9:9 adds, “Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.” When we seek to understand purpose and meaning according to the Scripture, we must first understand that it is impossible to have enjoyment without Christ. Psalm 16:11 says, “You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” Then, by faith, we can find satisfaction in honest labor, we can enjoy the food that we eat, and we can enjoy godly relationships, especially the most intimate of relationships with our spouse. Christianity is not all about having sullen faces and never having any enjoyment in life. God created the marriage relationship with pleasure in mind, and He gave us taste buds that enjoy many wonderful foods that He has provided. Purpose and meaning in life is not complete without understanding enjoyment and being able to enjoy things and God most of all. Even if we have nothing but Him, our joy can still be full. But it is one thing to pursue pleasure for pleasure’s sake, and it is another to praise and thank God for the opportunity and ability to enjoy pleasure and for His having thought up the pleasures in the first place. The world knows only the satiation of the flesh, but in Christ we can have satisfaction of the soul. There is a great difference between satiation and satisfaction. Satiation is a temporary fix that fades fast and always demands more, while satisfaction is happiness that transcends circumstances and never stops overflowing. In Christ alone can our lives overflow with joy, goodness, and lasting pleasure (Psalm 23:5).

Because Christ has satisfied our souls (Psalm 103:5), we can worship Him and be content whether we have plenty or even when we are in need. Matthew 5:6 says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Satisfaction comes as we pursue righteousness and learn to imitate Christ’s holiness by faith. As He sanctifies us, we learn to love Him more, to enjoy Him more, to enjoy the gifts He gives us during our short stay on earth (James 1:17), and to value eternal priorities more. Eternal priorities instruct us in terms of how we should invest our time. But before we think that maximum service at the expense of enjoyment is God’s purpose for us, we had better learn to value enjoying the simple things of life. Some Christians are too caught up in Christian activities to pause and linger over a meal with friends or family (John 21:12, Acts 2:46-47). Others are overly devoted to missions and evangelism that they actually neglect their own wife and children, a direct violation of the commands of Scripture (1 Corinthians 7:3-5, Deuteronomy 6:7). Our world tends to exalt those who sacrifice family and morals for the sake of getting more money or advancing a career. But this is not right, and it should not be reflected in the church of Jesus Christ. There is great meaning and purpose in talking with our children about the ways of God as we go through the everyday activities of life, there is great meaning in valuing our spouse as the most important relationship on earth, and there is great meaning in using our spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ. If we sacrifice family for church service, we are out of balance. If we never labor in the harvest fields and use family as an excuse, we are out of balance. Church is not life, and family is not life. Eternal life is knowing Jesus Christ (John 17:3); that is, it is an ongoing, vibrant relationship. As He leads us and as we enjoy Him, we can serve as He directs us and love those dear to us.

Our life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3), for we have been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). He lives in us so that we would do as He desires on earth. Purpose flows out of cultivating this most important heavenly relationship. As we enjoy God and continue to know Him more, our joy and strength will increase and impact all of the other important relationships in our lives. We will find power and motivation to take every opportunity, every talent, every ounce of energy, and every truth of Scripture and faithfully bear fruit as we imitate Christ and love as He loved. The end game is a life that has produced abundant fruit, indicative of godly character (Galatians 5:22-23), good works (Titus 2:14), and an effective witness (Proverbs 11:30). As John 15:8 says, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” The worship of God and the soul’s ambition to bring Him glory should never become a drudgery, empty, hollow, or self-focused and performance based. A life that is most effective in fruit-bearing will be one that has found complete fulfillment, satisfaction, and sufficiency in Christ with no doubt of His love, His goodness, His sustaining grace, or His sanctifying power and promise. Abiding in Christ, loving Him, and keeping His commands are enjoyment to the heart that has found completeness in Him.

Solomon ends the book of Ecclesiastes by saying that the end of all purpose and meaning requires that we fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). The clear instruction is that there is a definitive path in life toward righteousness, holiness, satisfaction, and happiness, and it is through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Then, life makes sense, eternity explains the temporary, actions have consequences, people matter, and Christian love and service have eternal benefit. Jesus explains existence, and His Word explains Him. In Him is the abundant life, that is, life to the full (John 10:10). The world will always get it wrong and find death, loss, and destruction, but the Bible points us to worship God, to enjoy Him, to thank Him, to praise Him, to serve Him, and to glorify Him. These are all things believers will do forever. Psalm 86:12 says, “I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And will glorify Your name forever.” As soon as we repent and trust Christ to save us, we begin glorifying Him, and, if we follow Him with all of our hearts, we will not be disappointed but surprised by how much fun it is to love, worship, enjoy, and obey Him. We will be able to enjoy the simple things of life, use our time and energy most wisely, and glory in Him as we exalt His name and thank Him for every good and perfect gift.

Life in Christ is an adventure, and it will take us places we never thought we would or could go and enable us to do things we never thought we could or would do. Faith isn’t easy, but it is fulfilling and even fun. God didn’t create us to be miserable but to be launched on a trajectory of eternal bliss of being enraptured with Him and praising His name forever. In heaven, the adventure will continue, new things will be learned and experienced, and there will be no lack of anything. Living with this eternal hope and in anticipation of our coming glorification, we will live as those who know what they are here for and Who they are here for. Eternal life is knowing Christ (John 17:3), and, as we walk by faith, we will find it to be far more than we ever thought it would be.