

# IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

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## Text: Psalms 16

“Examining life for Deeper Meanings is a twentieth century preoccupation. We assume that things are not what they seem. Words disguise Hidden Feelings. Actions symbolize Something Else. We sometimes try too hard to discover the hidden meanings when there just might not be anymore to it than what is on the surface. **Tom Mullen illustrates this at the very beginning of his book:**

**An engineer, a psychologist, and a theologian** were hunting in the wilds of northern Canada. They came across an isolated cabin, far removed from any town. Because friendly hospitality is a virtue practiced by those who live in the wilderness, the hunters knocked on the door to ask permission to rest. No one answered their knocks, but, discovering the cabin was unlocked, they entered. It was a simple place--two rooms with a minimum of furniture and household equipment. Nothing was surprising about the cabin except the stove. It was large, potbellied, and made of cast iron. What was unusual was its location: it was suspended in midair by wires attached to the ceiling beams.

"Fascinating," said the psychologist. "It is obvious that this lonely trapper, isolated from humanity, has elevated his stove so he can curl up under it and vicariously experience a return to the womb."

"Nonsense!" replied the engineer. "The man is practicing the laws of thermodynamics. By elevating his stove, he has discovered a way to distribute heat more evenly throughout the cabin."

"With all due respect," interrupted the theologian, "I'm sure that hanging his stove from the ceiling has religious meaning. Fire 'lifted up' has been a religious symbol for centuries."

The three debated the point for several minutes without resolving the issue. **When the trapper finally returned**, they immediately asked him why he had hung his heavy potbellied stove by wires from the ceiling. **His answer was succinct: "Had plenty of wire, not much stove pipe!"**

*Tom Mullen, Laughing Out Loud and Other Religious Experiences*

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) pp. 40-41.

**There is nothing like despair, anger, hurt, sorrow, grief and the need for acceptance to cause one to examine the deeper meaning of life.** The psalmist is experiencing all this and more in this psalm. It is a crisis moment for him. Will he find the answers to what makes life worth living or will he simply give up.

Let's look at the *answers* at which he has arrived concerning whether or not life is worth living.

**I. LIFE IS WORTH LIVING WHEN WE REALIZE WE ALWAYS HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD (v. 1).**

**A. We can always look to the Lord for help (v. 1a).**

**B. We can feel secure in knowing that God will never abandon us (v. 1b).**

**Lewis B. Smedes, in his book, How Can It Be All Right When Everything Is Wrong?, writes, "Grace does not make everything right. Grace's trick is to show us that it is right for us to live; that it is truly good, wonderful even, for us to be breathing and feeling at the same time that everything clustering around us is wholly wretched. Grace is not a ticket to Fantasy Island; Fantasy Island is dreamy fiction. Grace is not a potion to charm life to our liking; charms are magic. Grace does not cure all our cancers, transform all our kids into winners, or send us all soaring into the high skies of sex and success. Grace is rather an amazing power to look earthy reality full in the face, see its sad and tragic edges, feel its cruel cuts, join in the primeval chorus against its outrageous unfairness, and yet feel in your deepest being that it is good and right for you to be alive on God's good earth. Grace is power, I say, to see life very clearly, admit it is sometimes all wrong, and still know that somehow, in the center of your life, "It's all right." This is one reason we call it amazing grace--. Grace is the one word for all that God is for us in the form of Jesus Christ.**

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 256.

**II. LIFE IS WORTH LIVING WHEN WE REALIZE THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE, BUT PART OF A LARGER FAMILY (vv. 3-6).**

**A. Those who love God and who love us are all around.**

I think that many times the problem is not that we have been abandoned, but rather that we have withdrawn from others. Perhaps we should cease to think only in terms of our needs and ourselves and realize that we are a part of a larger family—each of whom need the same encouragement, as do we.

**Someone wrote**, “If I can throw a single ray of light across the darkened pathway of another; if I can aid some soul to clearer sight of life and duty, and thus bless my brother; if I can wipe from any human cheek a tear, I shall not have lived my life in vain while here.

If I can guide some erring one to truth, inspire within his heart a sense of duty; if I can plant within my soul of rosy youth a sense of right, a love of truth and beauty; if I can teach one man that God and heaven are near, I shall not then have lived in vain while here.

If from my mind I banish doubt and fear, and keep my life attuned to love and kindness; if I can scatter light and hope and cheer, and help remove the curse of mental blindness; if I can make more joy, more hope, less pain, I shall not have lived and loved in vain.

If by life's roadside I can plant a tree, beneath whose shade some wearied head may rest, though I may never share its beauty, I shall yet be truly blest--though no one knows my name, nor drops a flower upon my grave, I shall not have lived in vain while here.”

**Author Unknown**

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) pp. 59-60.

## **B. Focusing on our inheritance in Christ gives us peace.**

This is not “pie in the sky, sweet bye and bye” wishful thinking. This is focusing on what we already possess in Christ.

# **III. LIFE IS WORTH LIVING WHEN WE SEEK A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (v. 8).**

## **A. We must choose a close relationship to the Lord if we want to experience His comfort.**

Rufus Jones lost a son of eleven years who was all the world to him. He wrote many years later about the experience, concluding with this luminous parable of how his own heart was opened to God's love:

When my sorrow was at its most acute I was walking along a great city highway, when suddenly I saw a little child come out of a great gate, which swung to and fastened behind her. She wanted to go to her home behind the gate, but it would not open. She pounded in vain with her little fist. She rattled the gate. Then she wailed as though her heart would break. The cry brought the mother. She caught the child in her arms and kissed away the tears. "Didn't you know I would come? It's all right now." All of a sudden I saw with my spirit that there was love behind my shut gate.

If you suffer with God you will find love behind your shut gate, a love that can lead you through the gate to be at home with all the children of God.

--James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 17.

## **B. The result of close relationship to God will be security.**

# **IV. LIFE IS WORTH LIVING WHEN WE REMEMBER THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (vv. 9-11).**

## **A. Our heart can rejoice in the eternal faithfulness of God (vv. 9-10).**

*I like what Charles Haddon Spurgeon had to say about God's faithfulness*, "It is always unpleasant when reading an interesting article in a magazine to find yourself pulled up short with the ominous words, "To be continued." Yet they are words of good cheer if applied to other matters. What a comfort to remember that the Lord's mercy and lovingkindness is to be continued! Much as we have experienced in the long years of our pilgrimage, we have by no means outlived eternal love. Providential goodness is an endless chain, a stream which follows the pilgrim, a wheel perpetually revolving, a star forever shining and leading us to the place where he is who was once a babe in Bethlehem. All the volumes which record the doings of divine grace are but part of a series to be continued.

--The Quotable Spurgeon, (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, Inc, 1990)

**B. We can rejoice that we are not wandering though life without meaning or direction (v. 11).**

- 1. We are or can be filled with the joy of the Lord (v. 11a).**
- 2. We can know the comfort of God's presence (v. 11b).**
- 3. We can be assured of "eternal pleasures" because of Him (v. 11c).**

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Erma Bombeck: "If I Had my Life to Live Over"**

I'd dare to make more mistakes next time; I'd relax; I would limber up; I would be sillier than I have been this trip; I would take fewer things seriously; I would take more chances; I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers; I would eat more ice cream and less beans; I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I'm one of those people who lives sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had it to do over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to do nothing else, just moments, one after the other instead of living so many years ahead of time. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, hot water bottle, raincoat, and parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have. If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dinners; I would ride more merry-go-rounds; I would pick more daisies.

--James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) pp. 25-26.

We can all look back over our lives and see things that we would do differently given the chance. But one thing that we do not want to leave left undone is our relationship with God. How tragic it would be to look back on one's life and have to say, "***If I had my life to live over I would have lived it for God.***" That would be the greatest tragedy and regret of all.

As you can see there are many *reasons* why life is worth living in Christ.