Find Meaning In Life

By DR. WALLACE FRIDY
Pastor of St. John's Methodist Church

Every person is interested in getting the most out of life and in finding meaning in it. To find this secret engages the attention of men and sends us on journeys in search for it.

It is commonly agreed that the great enemies to mankind today are fear, anxiety, hatred, bitterness, jealousy, envy, greed, lust, prejudice, and so the list runs. You can add other enemies that keep man from being his best and from finding real joy in life.

On the other side of the picture more and more we are coming to see that love, kindness, courage, faith, trust, and the like, are really the great benefactors of mankind. I guess love in all of its deeper meanings is the great single factor for good in life. Indeed, it is the greatest thing in the world. A loving nature tends to be a healthy nature. A joyous person radiates good cheer, and a cheerful heart doeth good like a medicine. With love and joy goes health.

But how can we be freed from the enemies of man, how can we rid ourselves of hatred, envy, jealousy, fear? How can we replace love for hate, joy for fear, and goodwill for jealousy? Ah, this is the rub!

WE READ in the scriptures that "perfect love casteth out fear." And this love has only been fully manifested in the life and person of Jesus of Nazareth. He alone in human form has shown men how to love.

The great loving natures which I have known in the Christian church have been those who were devoted to Jesus Christ and committed to Him. They have lived so close to Him that His love was manifested in their lives. It leads me to feel that only as we let God really love us can we love others. When we are really loved, then we are free to love.

To let God love us is to open our hearts to Him; it is to pause regularly in His presence in prayer; it is to wholly commit oneself to His way and His leading.

To be a committed person is to let God love us, and when we let Him and know that He does, and accept His love, then it is we can love ourselves. And to love ourselves is to be free to love others. A person who hates or despises himself tends to reflect this attitude toward others. Many times when we dislike or have enmity toward another,
we are reflecting our dislike of ourselves that we see in another.

IT IS NOT easy to be free from all that would keep us from being ourselves, from all that would tend to make us sick, from all that would sour life. We need the power and grace of God to help us do it. In fact alone we cannot. Helpless we are and contritely we must turn to Him.

To see this nature of love expressed in human form in human history, turn to the Fourth Gospel—the Gospel of John. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loved me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” (John 14:21)
Why Worship?

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Worship is not merely thinking about God, nor merely seeking to do His will, but it is an approach to Him. It is communion with Him. It is an effort on our part to communicate with Him and to express our desires, our hopes, our dreams, our needs to Him.

The object of worship is God. In its highest expression it is fellowship with Him. It is praise. It is adoration. It is thanksgiving.

There is a mood in our time which would have us believe that worship is a means of getting what we want rather than finding out what God wants and seeking strength to do it.

But worship is not primarily seeking to make our dreams come true but to understand more fully God's dreams and to find strength through Him that will enable us to follow them.

God is the object of our attention. It is to Him that we direct our thoughts. It is from Him that we seek help. It is through Him that we learn His way.

Let us now turn to some of the real values of worship and see what its real significance is for our lives.

IN THE FIRST place, worship makes us aware of our own sins and yet places us within the presence of one who can free us from them. It humbles us then exalts us. We see against the white light of Christ's love our own sordid selves. In His Presence we are ashamed when we see how far short we come to being the persons He would have us be.

BUT worship also lifts us up for it reveals to us not only our shortcomings but also inspires us to be and to do better. More than this we are placed within the presence of one who lifts us up. We come away renewed and inspired. We feel stronger for having worshipped.

Boytton Merrill has put it like this: "Whatever the thing may be, if it humbles us, if it gives us a vision of duty, if it exalts us, if it sends us back into the busy world with a steadying spell upon us — and if, above all, it makes us aware of God — it is worship."

IN THE second place, Worship alters our Outlook on Life. It helps us to see life, not
merely from our own eyes but from the eyes of God. It sends forth with a more reverent attitude toward all life. The person who has found God in a service of worship should more easily see God out in the world. He sees this as God's world and thus people and things within should be treated with respect. Communion with God creates goodwill toward men.

Again, in the third place, Worship brings us to a Sense of Inner Calm. It steadies us for the demands of day by day living. There is a peace which comes over us when we have communed with God. We may not have found our answer to some problem which confronts us but we know there is one. We are not satisfied with ourselves but we are surer of God's forgiving spirit and of His help to make us become what we should be. This inner calm comes to us because we are made aware that we are in the care and keeping of God's love. It gives us the same assurance that was expressed by a faithful old Negro follower of Christ when he said, "Nothin' is going to happen to me today that God and me together can't handle."

IN THE FOURTH place, Worship helps us to take our minds off ourselves and to focus them to God. In His presence we are made to forget our own and small petty worries and we are confronted with His greatness and His majesty. We lose ourselves in the wonder and beauty of His love.

Some years ago a woman faced with a nervous breakdown was told by her doctor to "go away and see something big." He knew that what she needed was to lose herself in the greatness of something majestic. There is a calming effect when we are confronted by some great work of God. Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone Park, Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon—such lifts us out of ourselves.

So in worship we lift our thoughts to the greatness of God and however stormy may be life around us, we are assured that at the heart of it there is a calm, that "underneath are the everlasting arms." Such were the thoughts of Sidney Lanier when he wrote:

"As the marsh-hens secretly builds on
the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest on the
greatness of God;
I will fly in the greatness of God as
the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space
'twixt the marsh and the skies:
By so many roots as the marsh-grass
 sends to the sod
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the
greatness of God."

"Do not wait
for a future
filled with gifts,
but seek the
opportunity to
make for your own
self a gifted
future!"

"Eternity is not
something that begins after you are
dead. It is going on all the time.
You are in it now."

Charlotte P. Gilman
Our Bible Comes Alive

By DR. WALLACE FRIDY
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In spite of the fact that the Bible is a best seller, to millions of people it is a closed book, and to thousands of Christians it is a book seldom opened.

One day in a church where I was serving, a lady came up following a discussion on the Bible and made this confession: "To me," she said, "it is a closed book for I cannot seem to understand it." Do you think her confession typical of many Christians today? What does the Bible mean to you? How often do you read it? How much of it do you read?

Why is the Bible a closed Book for so many people and one seldom opened by many Christians? For one thing, it is because many do not read it sufficiently to appreciate its contents and its value for us today. Many feel that it seems to speak to another age and not for today. Others feel that it appears to conflict with modern day knowledge. And then this materialistic and secularistic age has crowded it out. Then, it is because many do not know, or try to find out, the situation out of which each part came and the purpose for which it was written.

We believe that the Bible should be an open Book with wide distribution, and that there is value in reading it whether it is completely understood or not. We believe that it has a message all its own and speaks not only to the mind but also to the heart. We believe that God speaks to men today from the pages of this book and that there is great value in the devotional reading of the Scriptures.

So, our history is one of an open Book with wide distribution. We believe that there is value in reading it even without complete understanding or interpretation. But on the other hand we also believe that to fully appreciate it a person must know, as far as he can find out, the conditions out of which it arose and why it was written and to whom it was directed.

WHAT THEN IS the Bible? Of course we believe that it is the Word of God, but this Word is found in a library containing sixty-six books. Each of these books is a separate unit. The oldest book was written about 3,000 years ago and the most recent approximately 150 A.D. It is a literature which contains history, legend, poetry, drama, law.
This library is divided into two sections—the Old Testament and The New Testament. The Old Testament contains 39 books and it was written in Hebrew. It is a history of people—the Hebrew people. To quote another: “It tells the fascinating story of patriarchal life, the disappointing sojourn in Egypt, the weary wilderness wanderings, the rough bloody conquest of Palestine, the gradual formation of the monarchy, the tempestuous period of the Kingdom, the humiliating carrying away into Babylon, the adventurous return from exile, and the heroic and perilous days of Judaism in a land stripped of her ancient glory.”

Through it all God is the center of every aspect of life. He was at the center of their family life, their work, their school, their national life, their political life, their common life. Thus, for these people religion was interrelated in all affairs of their concern.

THE NEW Testament is the history and literature of the Christian movement and contains 27 books, all written in Greek. To quote another: “Jesus was the central figure. An infant church is organized after His death. A matchless missionary moves back and forth over the Graeco-Roman world. Churches were established in strategic centers and letters were written by Paul to establish them in the faith and to direct their growing life. Other literature came into being. In time, some of the literature came to be regarded as being more sacred than the rest. The selective process went on, church councils gave their confirmation, and our New Testament in its present form became a reality.”

But the Bible is not only a library of 66 books, containing the Old Testament giving the history of the Hebrew people, and a New Testament giving the history and literature of the Christian movement, but it is the Word of God giving the record of man’s religious experience. Thus, it is a book of Religion.

It is not a textbook of science or even primarily history, but a book of life or spiritual experience of God in the soul of man. In this Book we discover man’s most significant quest—his quest for God. We go to the Bible “to be introduced to the art of knowing God in terms of first-hand human experience.

Here we find not only man in search for God, but God’s progressive revelation to man. Thus, it is a book of Revelation, for through it God revealed Himself to man. It is an account of a remarkable evolution in man’s idea of God.

BEFORE MOSES appeared man worshiped God at local shrines—a stone, an oak tree, a mountain would do. Then after Moses the worship of God was at the Central Ark of the Covenant. Finally, it was located in Jerusalem, and Jehovah became a national deity rather than a tribal God.
Then came the prophets who rescued man from devotion to a national deity with man-like passions, and preached the moral character of God. For Amos, He was a God of justice; for Hosea, a God of kindness; and for Isaiah, a God of holiness. Then, Micah proclaimed all three. So we find in the Old Testament man's growing idea of what God was like. God did not change but man's conception of Him did. Or, put it another way, God progressively made Himself known.

Then, of course, Jesus Christ came and God through Him made Himself known in a form that man could understand. He became the bridge between Heaven and earth. Paul puts it like this in II Corinthians 5:19: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." He gives us a clue to what God is like. In Him we know the nature of God. Or in other words in Him we find the near end of God—the God for persons.

Luke puts it like this in Luke 7:16: "God hath visited His people." Here this doctor-writer Luke was referring to Jesus who came to live among men. He was saying what Paul was saying that "God was in Christ."

It is here that the human and the divine meet as God revealed Himself in the life of Jesus Christ. Here is the supreme revelation for us.

**BUT NOW WE** come to the heart of the matter, and that is the Bible is not only the record of the religious experience of a group of people, but it is also a living word which leaps out to men today when they sincerely and intelligently "search the Scriptures." It is one thing to see this Book merely as a historical treatise, but it is quite another thing to recognize that "here God is coming forth to encounter us with incomparable blessings in his hand. It is quite another thing to find oneself confronted in these pages with the living Christ."

So, let us saturate ourselves with the truths of this great Book and seek to find Him who moves among its pages. Our whole life will be lifted. Our faith will be more robust. Our love will be warmer. Our courage will take on new life as we hear Him speaking to us through Jesus Christ. "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end—heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away—I am the way, the truth, and the Life. Come follow me."

"To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."

Robert Louis Stevenson

"Some day when winds bend the golden corn Beneath the fiery-tinted west My blessed Lord will say well done And I shall enter into rest And tell the story Saved by grace"—Fanny Whittall

A revival of spiritual religion in the land would settle all our problems—social, political and economic."

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Even Unto Bethlehem - by Mr. F. H. Pau
Flower Arrangement by Mr. F. H. PAUL

Plant: Hyacinth and Plum Branch
Finn Brooch and Mandarin Ducks In The Snow
By Issa Mitsukoshi 1617-1691
The God-given gifts of Christmas
Are treasures that money can't buy —
The faith that was born in a manger,
The hope of a star in the sky!
The love of a Heavenly Father,
When He gave to mankind His Son.
May these wonderful gifts of Christmas
Make your day a
bright, blessed one!
The Manger

From the collection at the University of Peking - United Service to China
1790 Broadway - New York - A.J.
A Child to Born

Original painting by Mrs. Lin-Jen-Yu

Council on Christian Literature for Overseas Chinese

1 Upper Albert Road, Hong Kong
May the blessings of this Christmastide<br>fill your heart today.<br>And the promise of the New Year<br>guide you on your way!
(Augusta card)
The wise men worshipped him, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold and frankincense and myrrh. (Matt., 2:11)
And a Partridge in a Pear Tree
Somehow, not only in Christmas,
But all the year you through,
The joy that you give to others
Is the joy that comes back to you,
And the more you speak in blessed
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more your heart's possessing
Returns both make you glad.

John Greenleaf Whittier
"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."

--James 1:17
Mother and Child - by Cyrus De Rav Baldrige
American artist noted for illustrations of books about China
We Are Citizens Of Heaven

By DR. WALLACE FRIDY
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The story of England's colonization of this country is a romantic and thrilling one. For those who left the shores of home and hearth for an unknown land, they had the promise of adventure and adventure they found. It was no armchair affair; it was no "white collar job"; it was not for weaklings for only stout hearts survived.

So it is with the Christian faith. It is high adventure, and one reason for this is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians, 3rd chapter, 20th verse, where he writes: "But we are a colony of Heaven." He is saying that our real citizenship is in heaven. He reminds the Philippians that although they live on earth, their real home is elsewhere.

DR. FRIDY
miles away from Rome in Macedonia, his words have special meaning for they prided themselves on being Roman citizens. Of course Paul is conscious of the abiding ties of city and state upon them and recognizes the claims of the earthly state, nevertheless, he says that as Christians our major claim comes from a higher Kingdom.

Our task, then, as Paul sees it, as colonizers is to try and bring God's Kingdom to earth. Ours is to take the world for Christ, to unfurl His flag so that the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

Let us then look more closely into the words of our text: "But we are a colony of heaven." What does it mean to be here on earth good citizens of Heaven?

In the first place, to be true to our real kingdom we must be true to the king of that kingdom. Beyond the claims of earthly rulers comes the claims of God upon us. To Him we owe our first loyalty and allegiance. From Him we gained the chance to live. From Him we were loaned life which He expects us to return to Him. His claims upon us far outweigh the claims of man or state. They are supreme.

To be sure, the King has given us the freedom to reject His claim, to refuse to acknowledge Him as Lord and Ruler. We can set ourselves up as our own rulers. We can defy man. But though we refuse God's claim upon us, we cannot escape it. For when we refuse it, we are destroyed by our own sin and wrongdoing. Indeed, "We are restless until we rest

"God is the home of the soul; we are no good away from home except to return" - Bros. Rufus Mosley

We can say "Yes" or "No" to God - obey or disobey - for He made us creatures of free choice.
In Him." And when a man sets himself up as the center of his world, then he starts on a journey that leads to a dead-end street.

God is calling to each of us saying, "Give me thine heart; I am thy King; let me rule; my Kingdom is thy home." Recognizing this claim Ignatius put it this way, "I come from God — I belong to God — I am destined for God."

IN THE second place, if we are to be followers of the King, we must seek to bring the culture of the mother country to this new land. To truly colonize, the culture, ideals, ways, codes of the mother country must be firmly planted in the new land. Her flag must be unfurled on the land. This means that our standards of life must come from the heavenly realm and hold sway in our lives here and now. The culture of heaven must become the culture of earth.

Our traditions, our way of life, our national heritage, our customs, our prejudices — all must be judged by God's judgments. This calls for adventure and often times misunderstanding. This is where it hurts. Following God's ways means that at times we break company with the ways of the world. Henry D. Thoreau put it this way: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer." Ours is a different drummer.

So, if we are to be true colonists of heaven here on earth, continually we must seek to bring the laws and ways of God's Kingdom to bear on earth. Now we see that only as this is done can man survive the atomic age. Thomas Kelly puts it this way: "No average goodness will do, no measuring of our lives by our fellows, but only a relentless inexorable divine standard. No relatives will suffice: only absolutes satisfy the soul committed to holy obedience."

AND FINALLY, if we are to be true colonists of heaven, we must have frequent contact with the King of heaven. There is no substitute for this contact with the Christ if we are to live as one of His. Temporarily we may neglect His presence but sooner or later discover that we must come back. Prayer and worship become then the very life-line of Christian power. When this supply line is cut, then reinforcements cease to flow. The Christian who does not pray soon loses his Christian faith.

Some one has well said this about real worship. "It opens the avenue of the interior life and lets the spiritual currents from beyond us flow in and circulate about the roots of our being." It is those spiritual currents that keep us in touch with the King.

"We are not here to play, to dream, to drift. We have hard work to do, and tasks to lift. Since not the struggle, but the struggle itself is God's gift." — Mattie Babcock.

"Love is not blind, it sees more, not less, but because it is willing to see less."