

The Meaning of Life

Recently I watched a movie that affected me in an unexpected way. I didn't know what the movie was about before I watched it, but I was expecting to see a sweet, romantic film, perfect for a movie night with friends. By the end of that movie, however, I felt sickened at what I had just seen. The plot was about a young man who had become a paraplegic after living a full and active life. Once paralyzed, this man no longer saw any meaning for his life, and despite falling in love, he decided to end his life through assisted suicide. I was not angered simply because the movie did not end "happily-ever-after," but I was instead appalled by the fact that this film, and the book on which it was based, had romanticized death. Death is not romantic. God has made all life sacred, and it must be treasured because God treasures life.

When God created man, death was nonexistent. Death first occurred after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, and, as a result, God needed to kill an animal to provide a covering for their nakedness. This experience shows us that death is a consequence of sin. Ever since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, death has been a reality in our world, but death can never overcome the world. Through His Son, Jesus Christ, God made a way to defeat death once and for all. Jesus, who was holy and without sin, bore the weight of humanity's sins by His death on the cross. The story doesn't end there, however, because Jesus overcame death when He rose from the grave on the third day. When we accept Christ as our Savior, we receive eternal life because death has been defeated. If God sent His one and only Son to defeat death, then we have no choice but to realize how much He values life.

In the past year, the world has seemingly placed a high value on life amidst a global pandemic. We are required to wear masks and social distance to be respectful of others' health, and essentially, their lives. The U.S. Congress has introduced bills such as the Nursing Home Pandemic Protection Act, which seeks to care for the vulnerable. We may be tempted to think

that the world is turning a corner in support of life. However, we must not be fooled, because the world does not value all life, specifically life that is nearing its end. As Americans, it is easy to think that assisted suicide and euthanasia are someone else's problem; we may point to Switzerland's lenient laws on such issues and claim that we can do nothing about them. But it is our problem in America, too. Death with Dignity is a U.S. movement that advocates for a person's right to choose death. This organization has succeeded in influencing the nation through aggressive educational tactics and policy reform; citizens and legislators have responded by embracing its ideals. According to Death with Dignity, seven in ten Americans support the right of people with a terminal illness to die on their own terms. Ten states have Death with Dignity statutes, one state has made end-of-life options legal through a court case, and sixteen more have considered passing similar bills during this session of Congress alone.

Death with Dignity claims to value the worth of every human life, but in reality, this organization believes that there is a point at which one's life has no meaning. This belief stems from the culture's perception of "the meaning of life," not God's. The culture today finds meaning in self, and when a person can no longer gratify his desires, he believes his life is worthless. The Bible, on the other hand, says that our entire lives do have meaning. In the book of Ephesians, Paul writes to believers and says that God chose us before the foundation of the world. Through His Son, we are made holy and blameless; no matter a person's circumstances, he has the ability to live this life in Christ Jesus. What's more, Romans 8:38,39 says, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." We are never separated from God's love. God loves us, even as we near the end of our time on earth, and that is why we must choose life.

I can respond to God's great love in the same way that every child of God can respond: by praising the LORD. Psalm 150, the last chapter in the book of Psalms, is entitled "Let Everything Praise the LORD." It ends by saying, "Let everything that has breath praise the

LORD! Praise the LORD!” Based on this, it should not be difficult to find meaning in every life, even if that life is filled with pain or physical limitations. Scripture shows us that everything with life has the ability to praise the LORD. This is the meaning that the culture fails to recognize when it looks at self to find purpose. As I thought about the man in the movie who had decided to end his life, I realized that the movie’s title should have shown me that he desired only to live for himself; the movie is called “Me Before You.” When we embrace the idea of living for ourselves, life is indeed meaningless, as it was for the man in the movie. When we turn to God, we find an unconditional love that has defeated death, and therefore, we find a reason to live.

As I researched assisted suicide and euthanasia for this essay, I began to feel convicted to share what I have learned with others. I have learned that every life has value because God unconditionally loves His people. We must remember, however, that God is not only a God of love, but also a God of holiness; the reason that He sent His Son to defeat death was to save us from our unholiness, our brokenness. The world is broken right now; people are consumed with preserving their lives, but apart from Christ, their lives essentially have no meaning. Writing this essay has challenged me to share God’s love with the people around me so that they can find the true meaning of life.

Bibliography:

Death with Dignity - <https://www.deathwithdignity.org/>

Congress.Gov - <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/7048?s=1&r=4>

My Death, My Decision -

<https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/options/assisted-suicide-switzerland/>

The Bible. English Standard Version, Crossway, 2011.