

Life Can Be Full Of Meaning

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perceive? Can't they feel? Have they no depth of understanding?

LIFE CAN BE
FULL OF MEANING.

Scripture: Matthew 7:7

FOR MANY years we have emphasized one repetitive theme—the poor, miserable, unhappy flower-children who seek to escape from life because it has problems and they don't like what goes on! The thing makes life its problem self and all the circumstances of this life; that a person If a person doesn't like what goes on, why doesn't he take hold of it, do something about it, make it the way he wants it? That's the thought to be put himself up against this troubled world and infused with new life; and that all of this can be done not by a person's own strength, but through the power of Jesus LIFE is a tremendous thing if you get a creative attitude toward it. A friend of mine, for example, began to fall on Christ in his heart.

So often today we hear people moaning that life has no meaning. How any enlightened, intelligent, perceptive individual could decry this marvelous thing called life is simply beyond my comprehension! Yet today we hear thousands of young people growling and grumbling that there is no meaning in life. I remember a few years ago I was in a restaurant on East 61st Street in Manhattan. The older man sitting next to me was Smiley Blanton, the psychiatrist, my dear friend

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This is a recorded transcription of a sermon delivered extemporaneously by Dr. Peale at Marble Collegiate Church.

Thousands of people around the world ~~read his~~ ^{heard} But that hat was really a part of ~~him~~ ^{himself} also printed copies of Dr. Peale's sermons. We will also gladly mail them to ~~you~~ ^{you, your family and friends.} Simply send names and addresses (with Zip code): Foundation for Christian Living, Pawling, N.Y. ~~around his ears.~~ ^{and his ears.} He was a genius in understanding human

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You can have a life full of meaning ~~if you~~ full of meaning. Your life can be wonderful if you see the wonder in it. Your life can be full of interest if you take an interest in it. Your life can be exciting if you live and think excitedly. You can do anything you want with your life if you will do it. You can take hold of it and shape it and make it meaningful.

How pathetic are the dropouts of this present world - the poor, miserable, unhappy flower-children who seek to escape from life because it has problems and they don't like what goes on! The thing that life is its problems. If a person doesn't like what goes on, why doesn't he take hold of it, do something about it, make it the way it ought to be?

Life is a tremendous thing if you get a creative attitude toward it. A friend of mine, for example, began to fall on gloomy days. His mind was full of darkness. He had made a few mistakes he had messed things up and he was deeply unhappy. The zest for life had left him. One day I met another friend of mine, an older man, for dinner at a restaurant on East 61st Street in Manhattan. The older man was Smiley Blanton, the psychiatrist, my dear friend and associate for over thirty years and one of the wisest human beings I ever knew. Smiley was a character. He wore a floppy hat jammed down on his head. I could never understand how a man could wear such an awful-looking hat. But that hat was really a part of Smiley. He also wore mail-thru toasty-heat-up raincoat which he used to pull up and addresses (with) around his ears. He was a genius in understanding human

Well, Smiley met my unhappy younger friend and, being quick to feel the mental condition of another individual, he asked, "What's wrong, young man?"

So the younger man began to pour out his misery, frequently interjecting, "If only I hadn't done that!" "If only I had handled this thing better!" "If only I had foreseen the way it was going to turn out!" For fifteen minutes this gloomy "if only" recital went on. The poor man had lost all sense of the meaning of life.

Finally the doctor said, "Come over to my office. I want you to listen to a tape-recording of three unidentified people talking to me about themselves." For maybe an hour he listened to three miserable human beings declaring how bleak life was. Then Dr. Blanton asked, "What two words did you find embedded in the talk of all three of these people?"

The young man answered, "They seemed to keep saying, 'If only I hadn't done this ...' 'If only I had done that ...' 'If only it hadn't turned out that way ...' 'If only ...' "

The old psychiatrist said, "You have spoken the saddest two words in the English language. ~~Only!~~ *If only.*"

"Well," asked the young man, "what do I do?"

And the wise old man replied, "You must substitute for those two sad words two creative words. I tell you what. Eject those two words ~~only~~ out of your mind and put instead the two words ~~only~~ *next time.*"

My younger friend told me later that those two words: *next time* liked them. I slid them into my mind and could almost hear them click fast. And my life was changed. It was really remarkable. When any discouragement came I found myself saying, 'With the help of Jesus Christ, next time!' "

Everyone has his times of failure, of defeat, of frustration; but no defeat or failure or frustration is permanent.

There is always ~~next time~~ *next time*. Life is good. I wonder why the Lord brings the dawn around every twenty-four hours? It should remind us that though the night is black there can still be a new day. So live with the ~~attitude~~ *attitude* of

~~time.~~ That is one secret of making life meaningful. And a second is to practice the great principle that ~~if you can~~ *if you can*. There isn't any good thing you cannot do if you will think you can.

THERE is my esteemed friend W. Clement Stone. He is a very successful businessman. Through extraordinary intelligence, hard work and by the application of the basic laws of successful achievement he has made huge sums of money. But he gives it away under the equally important laws of benevolent motivation and always for creatively human purposes and values. He has given over a million dollars to our American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry. I never knew a man who gave so much money so generously as does Mr. Stone. It appears that his chief reason for making money is to help people. For example, he has helped more prisoners to find new life - and more boys to find a future - than anybody I know of. He started life with nothing. He was utterly poverty-stricken. He said that the Lord just gave him the gift of making money.

But I've noticed that a lot of people who make money hang on to it. Some of the tighest people I've ever known are people who have made money - they've got the idea that it is for them alone. If you have the ability to acquire wealth you should learn the equally important art of how to give it for mankind. You are a steward of God who made everything and owns all values of this world. Maybe I better take up a collection after this little speech!

Mr. Stone is a philosopher who says you should read the

Bible with the idea that God wants to do wonderful things for you. You get exactly what you are looking for, how says. If you seek inspiration, you become inspired. If you seek knowledge, you become informed. If you seek wisdom, you become wise. If you seek health, sickness appears and it comes to you. Seek success and it will come to you. Know specifically what you want and then keep your mind on that which you want and off the things you don't want. If you keep thinking about what you don't want, you'll get what you don't want. But if you think about what you want, it is likely to come to you.

Mr. Stone declares that the greatest, most creative is Matthew 7:7: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. And he paraphrases it: "Ask for the specific thing that you desire. Believe, put it in God's hands, and if it is His will you receive it." Then look for it. Get into action. Think creatively. What do you want out of life? You can if you *think* you can!

THERE are so many depressed people in the world today talking about how American society is going to pieces and saying that the younger generation doesn't amount to anything. The younger generation is all right; it is just the way they have been handled that is the problem or the way they are handling themselves, some of them. I was reading about Archie Moore. Well, Archie Moore is a former champion prize fighter, a big husky black man. Not long ago he was given an award as "Mr. San Diego" - leading citizen of San Diego. He is a great Christian. Three or four years ago he became worried about the vandalism of boys in the Negro section of a smaller California town. (He worries about bad little white boys too.)

Being well aware that bad little Negro boys aren't any worse than bad little white boys and that none of them are essentially bad boys - just good boys acting badly.) So he thought he would try to help these boys and he began pondering how to do it.

He put up a punching bag outdoors in the street and stood there punching this bag. A little Negro boy came and wide-eyed and looked at him and said, "Gee, Mister, you sure do know how to punch that bag!" He added, "You know something? I can do it the same as you." "You can, eh?" said Archie. "Tell you what you do. You bring 10 more kids here tomorrow. I want to see how good you all do it."

Next day the little boy showed up not with 10 other kids - but with 30 kids. Archie asked them, "You boys want to learn to fight?" "Yeah, we want to learn to fight." "Well," he said, "then you've got to learn the ABC's of fighting. Remember that the A comes before the B and the B comes before the C. The first thing you've got to do is to learn defense. You've got to learn to block and

you never want to learn to fight in order to hurt anybody; you want to learn to fight so that when a bully attacks, you know you are strong and can walk away from them in dignity." He was giving them instruction in right living, you see, while he taught them to use the punching bag. And pretty soon he was teaching not 30 kids but 60 kids. One day he said, "Boys, what do you say we start a club?" They all wanted to join. And Archie Moore called it the ABC Club - ABC for *Any Boy Can*. One of the rules is that each day when the program starts every boy has to show his school report card or graded test or theme. If a boy's grades aren't good enough he gets thrown out until

he gets them up to snuff. The local schoolteachers were astonished at the high grades made by who about the hard things, because it is the hard things which previously had been scraping the bottom. And this led to Moore's developing a similar program on a large scale pleasant but they are awfully good for us. We aren't supposed to go through life on flowery beds of ease. Whoever makes the tough becomes tough, and when he becomes out, "Students!" The boys fall into line and recite the Pledge of Allegiance, smartly placing their saluting arms across their hearts: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Then Archie Moore calls out the question, "What does ABC mean?" A couple who are members of Marble Collegiate Church were recently robbed. Someone broke the lock on their door, messed up their apartment and took all the valuables they most highly prized. They have illness in the family too. It must have been quite a shock to them that in the supposedly protected apartment house where they live such a thing could happen. But it doesn't seem to have shaken their serenity. I asked them, "How come you are so calm about it?"

The boys shout with one voice: "Any Boy Can - if he wants to."

"If he wants to what?"

"Wants to improve himself," they shout, "and be a better student and a better American."

"What can a good student become?"

"Doctor!" "Preacher!" "Actor!" "Governor!" "President!"

And Archie Moore asks, "What does a good student do?"

And the answer is: "He doesn't steal. He doesn't drink. He doesn't sniff glue. He doesn't take narcotics."

Boys out of the ghetto, black and white, rise to higher ways of living because of the influence of a godly prize fighter who teaches them a basic principle: *Any Boy Can*.

If He Thinks He Can. This country is not going down the drain, friends. Not while it has Archie Moores who love their fellow men and who teach so astutely the great principle *You Can If You Think You Can*.

can be full of meaning if you know what to do about the hard things, because it is the hard things which lead to the life out of you. These hard things aren't very pleasant but they are awfully good for us. We aren't supposed to go through life on flowery beds of ease. Whoever makes the tough becomes tough, and when he becomes out, "Students!" The boys fall into line and recite the Pledge of Allegiance, smartly placing their saluting arms across their hearts: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

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The man answered, "Well, you know, it just proves that God must like us and knows we can handle problems - He has given us such a mess of them at one time."

Now that is what I call spiritual maturity. They don't expect life to be easy; they just take it as it comes and relate it to God, happy that He likes them so much that He trusts them with many problems.

All around us in this world there are people who are in trouble in need, in sorrow, in poverty, in sickness, in unhappiness, in misery. If you want to make life meaningful for yourself, get out and do something about it. Get into it. Get out of your comfortable ways. People who find meaning in life are people who give themselves for other people and get into hard things in the world.

One day a Mexican migrant worker I heard about. I suppose when you get right down to it one of the most under privileged groups of people in this country is the migrant

farm laborer. Many of them don't speak English. They follow the crops and live in a very unfortunate, economically depressed manner. They just don't belong anywhere. It is one of the groups in this country that is neglected. Some of the churches have been trying to do something for the migrants, but it is not enough. For too many people they are still just statistics - migrant workers.

Well, one of these workers is named Manuel Corral. And he did a heroic thing. Afterwards at the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas they gave a big banquet in his honor. The hall was filled with people paying tribute to a little wetback Mexican worker who can't speak English. And as he sat there at the head table a little boy named Randy McKinley, 3 years old, came running to him and climbed up on Manuel's knee and put his arms around Manuel's neck, put his head down on Manuel's shoulder - and went to sleep. When Manuel rose to receive his award the little boy still clung to his neck, his blond curls against the Mexican's dark hair.

The story is this: One day Randy, age 3 and very slight, was running around in the yard of his grandparents' Texas farmhouse. Somebody had removed a barrel that had been placed over the top of an old abandoned well and cased with 16-inch pipe. Happy little Randy stepped into this open space and disappeared into the pipe - which went down 300 feet, with the water level 68 feet below the ground! The other children cried out in terror and ran to Randy's mother and she ran to the well and put her arm down into the pipe - but her hand encountered nothing and she could hear displaced pebbles bouncing off down into the deep, dark distance. She screamed again and again: "Randy! Randy!" Faintly from below she heard a little voice which told her that he was alive.

She began screaming for help. Manuel Corral happened to be working in a field nearby, with three other men. The four Mexicans came running. Manuel, though he couldn't understand a word of English, knew at once what had happened. He told the others to make a long strong line from pieces of rope and baling wire. Then he had them tie it around his ankles and lower him head first into the well.

The pipe was 16" in diameter and Manuel, although he weighed only 125 pounds, was 17" across the shoulders. But by hunching his shoulders he was able to get through the opening. And down he went into the darkness. The air in the long unused well was foul-smelling. Noxious gasses made him feel deathly sick. But he pushed on down the pipe for 20 feet until he came to an inverted "Y" where the shaft branched and went two ways. Which way should he go? He sent up a prayer asking, "Dios, (God) tell me which." He took one of the shafts and went on down, down into the blackness, getting stuck every few feet, forcing his way on, realizing he could not stay conscious much longer in his head-down position. He could feel his skin scraping off against the pipe. But finally his groping hand felt a tousled, wet head of hair and he could hear the sound of a child gasping and choking. The boy was clinging to a narrow ledge just below the water line. Manuel locked his arms under the child's armpits and cried out to the men to pull up fast. They started to pull. But the way he was holding the child had wedged Manuel's shoulders against the pipe so that they stuck. For a moment he had the awful terrorized feeling that he was going to die there head downwards in a pipe so many feet below the ground. But gradually they pulled them up. Manuel could feel his shoulder sockets being dislocated. He was bloody and sick and his head was injured. Once out of the well he just

lay on the grass while the mother hugged her little child, murmuring, "Oh, thank God, thank God!" The people standing around took up a collection and offered the brave Mexican \$100 in gratitude, but he refused it. He shook his head, pointing up, and just said, "Dios." For God. Late at the big banquet in Dallas, with the little boy nestled on his shoulder, heart against his heart, Manuel Corral must have been thinking, Isn't life wonderful!

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you..." Believe that you can and you can... Give yourself to the hard tough problems in this world. And life will be full of meaning.

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we give hearty thanks for the glorious life is. Bless us that we may know what we want in life and may so live that it may be opened up to us and we may receive it. Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

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