

Life's Two Biggest Questions



By Bob Helyar

There are two questions which confront most people at some time in their lives.

1. What is the meaning of life?

2. Is there life after death - and if there is, how can I be sure I will go to a good place when I die?

People are most likely to ponder these questions:

- when they are alone;
- when they are experiencing a crisis;
- when they wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning and can't get back to sleep; and
- when they attend a funeral of someone close to them (which is always a spiritually sobering experience).

People of different spiritual beliefs have various theories about the answers to these questions. Some believe that there is no specific meaning of life, and that when we die, everything is finished.

With respect to everyone's personal beliefs, I want tell you about a couple of short passages out of the New Testament, which I believe hold the Christian response to these two questions. (For those of you who have no knowledge or understanding of Christianity, the New Testament is the short, easy-to-read section at the end of the Bible which covers the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and his first followers.)

A man once asked Jesus, **"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"**

In response, Jesus asked him a question, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?"

The man answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and love your neighbour as yourself."

Then Jesus said, "You have answered correctly. **Do this and you will live - you will enjoy active blessed life in the Kingdom of God**".

So this was Jesus' answer to the question, **"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"** And, that question is basically the same as **"How can I be sure I will go to a good place when I die?"**

On another occasion, someone else asked Jesus, **"What is the most important commandment?"**

Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and most important commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself." He then made a statement which inferred that by obeying these two commandments, you will automatically obey all the others. This makes sense because if your highest priority in life is to love God and love your neighbour, then you won't lie, steal, murder, commit adultery, or do

anything else that has the potential to cause harm to anyone.

Now the question, "**What is the most important commandment?**" is like asking, "**What is the most important thing to focus on in life?**" which makes that question very similar to "**What is the meaning of life?**"

From the response by Jesus to the question, "What is the most important commandment?" we could develop a **definition of the meaning of life**, to read:

To live in a very close relationship with God, the Creator of the universe, and to draw from that relationship the love and wisdom required to most effectively love and serve your fellow man.

The thing to note at this point is that for both questions, ("What is the meaning of life?" and "How can I be sure I will go to a good place when I die?") Jesus has the same answer, "**Love God and love your neighbour**". In other words, **the answers to the two biggest questions in life are held in what Jesus referred to as the two most important commandments.**

OK, if these two commandments are so important, how do we apply them to our lives?

Go back to the man who asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" When Jesus made the response that loving God and loving your neighbour was the answer to

his question, the man then asked Jesus another question. **"And who is my neighbour?"**

In response to this question, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. Here is a brief summary of that story.

A man was travelling along a road when robbers attacked him. They left him beaten, naked and half-dead. Two different religious people came by on separate occasions, and passed him on the other side of the road. Then a man from a cultural group, which was regarded as less significant in that community, came along and took pity on him. He bandaged his wounds, and took him to an inn, where he paid the inn keeper to look after him.

After telling that story, Jesus asked. "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who was robbed and beaten?"

The man replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Then Jesus said, **"Go and do likewise."**

Therefore, it would appear that Jesus' clarification of the commandment to love our neighbour is, **"Respond with love and compassion to people you encounter as you travel through life who are suffering or experiencing some form of hardship."**

We can understand the concept of loving people (difficult as it may be to do at times), because we all have experience living with, and relating to people.

However, the matter of loving God is a bit more abstract, because we can't physically see, touch or hear him.

This is where the central message of the New Testament comes in. Here is my two-paragraph overview of that central message:

God's original plan, at the time of creation was for all of mankind to live in a loving father - child relationship with him. The first humans he created, Adam and Eve, made a choice to do something God had instructed them not to do, and this act of independence ended the close relationship with God for themselves, and for following generations.

*But God had a plan to allow that relationship with mankind to be restored. As the ultimate expression of his love for us, he sent his son Jesus to live on earth as one of us for thirty-three years. During his last three years, Jesus spoke to thousands of people, clarifying God's priorities and basic instructions for life, and demonstrated how to be a channel of God's love to people. He then suffered a torturous execution (crucifixion), **and for all who believe in him, his painful death would serve as the punishment for all the ways we have chosen to live independently of God.** After his execution, he was physically resurrected, and spent a short amount of time with his followers and others, before he was taken back up to heaven with God.*

Getting back to the question of "**how do we love God**", the first step is to put our trust in the teachings of

Jesus, because it is through accepting the significance of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and following his teachings, that we can enter into the restored father-child relationship with God, that he originally intended for us. **We can't say we seriously want to love God if we don't value the price he paid for us to have this relationship with him.** After taking this first step, it's just like growing to love anyone else - spending time alone with him, talking to him (prayer), and listening for the wisdom and guidance he brings to your mind. The other way to get to know him is by studying the messages he inspired others to write over thousands of years, (the Bible).

Imagine how the whole world would be if every nation based its laws and government policies on the two commandments I've discussed here (love God and love your neighbour). There would be no need to spend billions of dollars on defence. All that money could be redirected to ensuring that no one in the world was homeless or hungry. (Every day in the world about 30,000 children die of poverty related causes, including starvation, and preventable and curable diseases.)

Imagine how a city or community would change if increasing numbers of people based their lifestyles on these two commandments. The occurrence of all forms of lawlessness, domestic violence, addictions and the breakdown of family units would decrease dramatically.

Imagine how fulfilling our individual lives could be if we consistently lived in the restored father-child

relationship with God that he desires for us, and responded to his promptings to most effectively support those we encountered who are suffering or experiencing hardship.

There is one other statement made by Jesus that I want you to know about in relation to all this. **He said that he had come so that we could enjoy abundant life (or life in all its fullness).** If we put this statement together with what he said about the two most important commandments, then the combined message would be:

The most fulfilling and rewarding life will be experienced by putting your trust in the teachings of Jesus, entering into the Father-child relationship with God, and responding with love and compassion to the people you encounter who are suffering or experiencing hardship.

This message from the bible has particular value for people who are struggling to find some meaningful purpose to life, because **the "fullness of life" Jesus spoke of is available to anyone,** no matter what difficulties he or she may be experiencing, or has been through.

The whole world is in an incredible mess at the moment. Everyone is hoping for a national or international leader who will have the solution to every problem, (social, economic and environmental). But we've already had the perfect leader, and he left us with an extremely simple, but perfect solution.

LOVE GOD and LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR.

Most of the suffering in the world can be directly or indirectly related to the choice of individuals and leaders to live independently of these two commandments.

Out of this message, my hope is that you will be encouraged to take a close look at the New Testament, because I believe that anyone who seriously wants to discover the spiritual truths of life will find them as he or she reads it. If you don't like reading, start with the Gospel of Mark because it is the shortest account of the teachings of Jesus. In most translations, it's only about 20 pages, but I expect that you will then want to read the rest of the book, after you identify how life transforming its message is.

It is not my intention to tell anyone what to believe. I'm simply sharing with you a few statements the man Jesus made 2,000 years ago, which provide powerful, basic guidelines for the human race. It's up to you decide what you make of them, and what implications they may have for your life.

I'll leave it with you.

Here are the locations in the New Testament of statements I've discussed in this booklet.

Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, verses 25 to 37:

The man who asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life."

Gospel of Matthew, chapter 22, verses 34 to 40:

The man who asked Jesus, "What is the most important commandment?"

Gospel of John, chapter 10, verse 10:

The statement of Jesus about the fullness of life (abundant life).

Gospel of John, chapter 3, verse 16.

The ultimate expression of God's love for all mankind.

Thanks for taking time to read my booklet. To discuss any part of the content, please feel free to email me at: bob@answers4life.com.au

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