

Ponder and Pray

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Subject: Give meaning to your life
Scripture: John 10:10

Just a few days ago me and my wife were sitting on our bed and talking just casual matters and suddenly I told her "Liz, imagine our life is like a clock and we have in this world only 12 hours to live. Then because you are on the wrong side of fifty and I am on the verge of 60 we have lived most of our life and probably we are now at 10.30 of our life on earth" Wow, this was a sobering thought. After few laughs as usual we realized that we need to maximize usefulness of our life. We thank God for this life as our lives have been invested in the lives of many people for over 40 years as Christians. We also have some regrets as we feel we could have done much more than what we have done in the past. All of us know our life is absolutely and unequivocally brief and uncertain yet we live as if we are going to live forever. We should not be morbid about death yet we must keep death always in front of us to remind us that we have only one brief life and so make the best of our life here on earth. As Christians we are given a wonderful one opportunity to live a life for God.

Jesus said in John 10:10 "I came to give life and life abundant." What does it mean by abundant and how we can experience such life as individuals, as couples and as families? Is it possible or actually is there more to Christian life than what we are experiencing? Writing on this verse William Barclay says "The Greek phrase used for having it more abundantly means to have a superabundance of a thing. To be a follower of Jesus is to know who He is and what He means "to have a superabundance of life." Jesus offers us life of great abundance and vitality which can be enjoyed by us and shared with others. Do we have life to give away because if we have such life than the more we give away the more we receive.

Yes, the Bible talks about the brevity of life. Here are just a few samples. "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. James 4:14. "The length of our days is seventy years or eighty, if we have the strength; yet the span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass and we fly away" Psalms 90:10, "The grass withers and the flowers fall because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall but the word of our God stands forever." Isaiah 40:7-8.

But praise God that in Jesus Christ we are offered eternal life. One day we will leave this life like old tattered clothes and will be transformed forever. While on earth He has given us a new life and life abundant and we need to nurture this new and abundant life all the time. In order to experience this new life we must:

- Know who we are in Jesus Christ. Ever since the Lord saved us, we have become a new person with a new identity. We are now possessor of eternal life which means after death we will live forever in the presence of God.

- Know what we are called to be and do. 1 Peter 2:9 says "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful life"

- know how we can continuously grow in the Lord Jesus Christ. Your faith is like a plant and so it needs daily care, nurture and security.

- Know what to value in life. We should value our life, family, church and our surrounding. Material things must be assigned appropriate place in our life. The Lord has said that our life does not become meaningful with the abundance of things. Our valuation of the whole existence must be different than the world.

- Know our end and keep the end of our life always in front of us. When we think of the end of this life and beginning of new life, it gives us tremendous challenge and also a great hope and joy.

Even though we as Christians want to live our entire life on spiritual spheres yet there are many practical things needed to make our life meaningful and blessing to others. I have personally followed some of these in life and they have been a great blessing to me. It may sound trivial for many or even stupid but it will be a help to some. Let me share what I mean:

- Financial planning: We need money and hopefully a little more than someone else! Please never believe the nonsense that you must not earn well nor believe that money will bring all the happiness. Whatever may be your income always plan your finances. Earn as much as you can, give as much as you can and save as much as you can. One more advice under no circumstance go on debts. These days of easy loans and credit cards it is really easy to fall into this never ending trap. Follow this principle "No money no buy"

- Healthy eating: Not all us have great health yet what we eat affects our health in a major way. Remember no one has died of less eating but more of died of overeating.
- Exercise: I have met many Christian leaders who tell me they have no time for exercise. I just refuse to believe this. As you exercise you will have more energy and thus you will be able to accomplish more in a short time. Please follow a strict regimen of exercise.
- Habit of reading: I believe that all our formal education is just a foundation to build our life upon. A man who lives abundant life has a great and consistent reading programme. So read all sorts of books which will enhance your mental capacity, give you tools to serve God and those in need.
- Learning social skills: Some of us came from poor and village background and now we move among all kinds of people. Some of us travel to distant countries and meet people of all cultures. A person with good manners is well loved and accepted everywhere. Learn etiquettes of the place or the country you visit so that you are well accepted and not make of fool of yourself.
- Personal hygiene: This is one area we must give our attention. The way we maintain our bodies, put on clothes etc. reflects our inner life. If we are scruffy and filthy then we cannot really bless people.
- Clothing: Some of us need to learn to dress well. It does not mean expensive clothings but clothes that fit occasions and time. Even if we have old clothes they need to be clean and presentable. No one wants to drink from a dirty cup and so no one wants abundant life from people who are not presentable and clean.
- Relationship: One of the joys in life is to know other people and how we relate to each other goes a long way in fulfilling our life as human and even as a Christian. Nurture true friendship.
- Mental attitude: Most people live life with lemon face. They are never happy with anything or anyone in life. Your attitude changes many things around you. When you have positive attitude to life then you will be full of joy and people will flock around you to experience your joy. Remember God counts grumbling which comes from negative life as one of the great sins of the flesh.
- Laugh a lot. Learn to enjoy life as it comes to you. The world is not only beautiful but also funny. Look around and you will see many things to laugh about. Someone has said “Laughter is the best medicine” and whoever said it was bang on the dot. While merrymaking you must not hurt the sentiments of others and your fun should be clean and dignified. I am more than ever before convinced that at times hiding behind some excuse or the other we neglect nitty gritty of our lives. So these suggestions may help some people to examine their day to day life and amend. When we decide to follow the Lord Jesus Christ we started our spiritual pilgrimage. The majority of the people of the world do not believe what we believe and some oppose as well. But we go on this journey and keep blessing people. In Chapter 12: 2 God told Abraham “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing” Was it not enough if only Abraham was blessed? No, God wanted Abraham to be a blessing to other peoples as well. In the same way God wants us to bless not only us but bless others. So Jesus came to give us life which is adequate for us and bless others for which we needed more than just life. We need abundant life. We cannot give if we do not have enough to give.

For me Christian life started with my need to be saved from sin and receive forgiveness of God. I am thankful to God that He has forgiven my sin and graciously granted me salvation. This is what I term as life but God had more in store for me and that was abundant life. This life is more than what we can have. But we have so much of life that it flows out to the people we come in contact. We not only become life receiver but also life giver. The Lord taught “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Luke 6:38. God has perennial and abundant blessing and so keep giving and God will pour His life into you. A true spiritual receptor is always a great giver. So the more you get the more you give. Conclusion: Imagine yourself at your death bed and in a few minute you will leave this world forever. You may curse, beg, struggle and try to cling on to life but death is not going to let you go. If your life is played like a movie in front of you, will it bring peace to you or horror? Are you going to regret the wasted years or thank God? Well, if we live an abundant life then there will be no cold regrets but joy. So folks give meaning to your life and let your life be counted for something wonderful which will bring glory to God. Go out there and bless someone today. Let me close with this prayer Saint Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen. Poignant statement: The abundant life does not come to those who have had a lot of obstacles removed from their path by others. It develops from within and is rooted in strong mental and moral fiber. This life comes only from God. He not only gives life but life abundant.

Prayer: Lord, our life had no meaning till you came in our life. You forgave our sins and gave us life and an abundant life. So Lord, fill me and overflow my life so that others be blessed through me. Let me be a real channel of blessing.