The Meaning And Purpose Of Our Life: In The Bible And In Psychology

Is there more to life than becoming successful and acquiring many worldly possessions? During, many stages in a person's life they often question why they are here, or what they are supposed to be doing. Unfortunately, answering these questions is hard because of all the adversity and trials that the world has to distract us from the spiritual journey.

According to the bible, human's purpose is to share the love of God with each other and prepare for the afterlife. God made humans in his image in order to share the everlasting happiness of heaven with us. It is evident from reading the bible that God has a purpose for our life. What is not always evident is what that purpose is. In Corinthians 8:28 it is stated, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Jesus tells us that this purpose is to love and serve God and to love and serve others. As humans made in the image of Christ; our purpose is to live like Christ. Overall, the meaning and purpose of life is not that easy to find. To answer that one question you must begin to ask yourself other questions that involve some introspection.

Psychologist, Sigmund Freud answers this question: "… only religion can answer the question of the purpose of life. One can hardly be wrong in concluding that the idea of life having a purpose [at all] stands and falls with the religious system"(Civilization and Its Discontents, 1930). Freud answers this question with one word. With that being said, life gives us infinite possibilities and choices that we must decipher through that makes following that one task seems impossible. During, childhood your tasks are so remedial that it doesn't even cross your mind that maybe there is a reason you are here except to fulfill your desires and needs. As an infant and even as a child when you start to cry someone immediately tries to understand what is wrong to get you to stop. It is that simple to get your needs met, just cry. Though in adulthood that does not work. As an adult, you must work and go out into the world to meet your needs. If you cry no one cares because you are supposed to be capable of satisfying your needs yourself. Then all of the sudden adulthood hits, and it becomes clear that the surrounding people are expecting you to look outside yourself and care about them. Now, not only do you have to care about your needs and wants, but the needs and wants of others. Questions start to circulate in your head about getting married, finishing school and starting a career. All of these thoughts begin to accumulate along with the negative thoughts about what if those things never happen. As we age these questions change. Now there are concerns about security, death, and what is going to happen when you die. Your purpose suddenly shifts because everything that used to matter to you and give you purpose is either gone, or it doesn't matter anymore. Again the question of what is your purpose arises as if you are still a young adult.

The meaning and purpose of life is in a natural law as so far as natural law directs us. It pertains to human beings, and God put us in it by nature. One thing humans have in common with other humans is the desire to know about God and live in the political community. In the bible, the Lord says "For I know well the plans I have in mind for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope (Jeremiah 29 v.11)." In this scripture, God communicates to us that no matter what we are going through he already knew about it, and he has a greater plan for our lives. When we put our whole heart into him he will provide for us. In St. Thomas's Summa I-II,

q.94, a.2 he states that “Third, there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society: and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law; for instance, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination.”

Love thy neighbor is one of the commandments. Victor Frankl addresses the topic of love in his novel. He focuses on how love can be the only thing that helps to get you through tough times “I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love.” (Man's search for meaning). If you are going to claim to follow Christ you must love and serve others. Spreading wealth and generosity to people around you is one way of showing God that you love him. Acts of service is a way to thank him for all he has done for you. There are certain things that we all desire in life happiness, love, goodness, truth, and beauty. You can experience these things fully by following Jesus Christ. God sacrificed his only begotten son for our sins which is the purest form of love. Aquinas touches on the subject of happiness “it follows that God alone is truth by His Essence, and that contemplation of Him makes man perfectly happy(ST, I-II, q.3).” It is through Jesus that we are can seek a life free from sin. Nevertheless, we must pray that our will is aligned with the will the God has for our lives.

We must actively work for our purpose through meditation, prayer or attending church. The meaning and purpose of life does not just come to you without you being active in some way. Indeed God does have a plan for us all, but without the proper time and dedication, you can become lost. On the other hand, the world does not make it this easy. There are plenty of times when life gets hard, or things do not seem to be going the way that you would have imagined. At these times sticking to your purpose can seem impossible. In the book “Man’s Search for Meaning”, concentration camp survivor Victor Frankl said that he survived the nazi torture camps because he continued to have faith that they would survive. Not only that, but they had goals that kept them looking forward.

Life or even sometimes we can put ourselves in situations that appear to have no hope. “Nietzsche’s words, “He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how,” could be the guiding motto for all psychotherapeutic and psychogenic efforts regarding prisoners. whenever there was an opportunity for it, one had to give them a why – an aim – for their lives, in order to strengthen them to bear the terrible how of their existence. Woe to him who saw no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose, and therefore no point in carrying on. He was soon lost. The typical reply with which such a man rejected all encouraging arguments was, “I have nothing to expect from life anymore.” what sort of answer can one give to that?” (Man’s Search for Meaning). Frankl constantly reiterates not to ask what is the meaning of life, but ask about what can you do for life, what can you do for others. Although your life may not be where you want it at the moment you cannot give up rather get outside of yourself and focus on the needs of others. When life gets difficult and things go wrong we cannot begin to question God’s plan. Instead we should thank him for our failures or hardships and stop being self-centered.

Ultimately, it is a sign of our devotion to God. If we only praise him during the good times then that means that there is a condition on our love. By attempting to glorify God in everything that we do we grow closer to him thus becoming closer to fulfilling our purpose. There is purpose in adversity. Meanwhile, the world offers plenty of distractions to keep us from focusing on God. As he states in the Jeremiah scripture we must love him with our whole hearts. Our whole

hearts do not include the piece that is not currently loving your sports car. If we are constantly focusing on worldly possessions then you will never be able to experience the goodness a life with Christ offers. Then there are people that question why can they not find their purpose on their own. This is a valid question. They want the freedom to make their own choices to decide what is meaningful to them and what is good. The problem with this way of thinking is that this is selfish. It goes against everything the Lord wants for us. God specifically states in the bible the life that he wants for us, so if someone chooses to ignore that to create their own purpose they are ultimately denying God. As an adult if you continue to ignore the needs of others while constantly trying to only complete your own task that can cause problems. Due to selfish ways like this we have a society with criminals. A criminal ignores the desires and needs of others to fulfill their own purpose. If someone works hard to buy a laptop and you steal it this is a blatant disrespect to your neighbor. As apart of God's law we are asked to love our neighbors and follow his purpose for us. When people began to go off making up their own purposes then we have chaos.

The question of whether certain things are right or wrong arises. People will begin to define goodness on their own. Although doing good things does not mean that you are following the Lord either. Anyone can complete a "good" task. This is not what I am saying. Conversely, Christians must bring glory to God through their actions. It is more than doing good things to get into heaven, but rather having a set of moral that you live by that help them to see the world from outside of themselves. People who do not believe in God or any higher power lack the morality and self-determination that Christians' possess because they do not know that good is. All in all if you do not know what good is how can someone claim to have goodness in their lives. For this reason, the purpose of our lives is to love others and serve God. Everyone looks for meaning besides the obvious being born and dying. There is not one sentence in the bible that starts off with your own specific purpose and steps to complete it, but God says in the bible his purpose for us. He gave us commandments to follow to help us carry out his purpose. When you learn to put your trust in God instead of worldly possessions you find a deeper meaning. This is a simple request from God, but people do not get this because they are too focused on themselves. We cannot have personal fulfillment whilst only doing things for ourselves. There must be unselfishness in completing tasks. Through the power of Christ anyone can find a meaningful calling in life. Whether it be big or small. God created us in his image to be above other animals. We must carry out our tasks as stewards following his word and his word only.