



PUBLICATIONS--Manna: Food for the Journey of Spirituality

Articles

Why Did You Get Up This Morning?

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For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good (Titus 2:11-14).

How many of us have paused today to think about why we got up this morning? No doubt, few of us have stopped to consider the question. Besides, the answer may seem obvious and simple: I got up this morning because I had to! I have things to do, after all! Perhaps you have children who must be dressed, fed, and hurried to the bus stop. Maybe you must give an important presentation at the office. Or perhaps you have a long-delayed project that needs doing around the house. On the other hand, you may have gotten up this morning for a less compelling but more enjoyable reason. Maybe you rose early to be at your favorite fishing hole just as the bass began to bite. Or maybe you got up early this morning to make the big sale at the mall.

So why did you get up his morning? The question I am inviting you to consider is not trivial; rather, it is of utmost importance. I am asking you to consider exactly what it is that gives direction and purpose to your daily activities. Stated differently, what is the driving force of your life? To give the question a more philosophical bent: What is the reality that undergirds your life and gives it meaning? What deeply moves you and brings purpose to your existence? In short, what are you doing here on earth in the first place?

Theologians and philosophers have tossed questions like these around for centuries and have offered a variety of answers. Cynics, on the other hand, insist that there are no answers, that there is no meaning or purpose to life. According to them, we are nothing more than the unfortunate result of a cosmic coincidence. To the contrary, Christians insist that there *is* meaning to life. We say that history is moving toward a definite goal, though we may have difficulty articulating exactly what that is. Nevertheless, many Christians fail to go about our daily routines with an ongoing awareness of the ultimate purpose of our lives.

Yet, if we really understand the eternal purpose of our lives--if we really know why we get up in the morning--our lives will be filled with meaning. In addition, both the opportunities and the difficulties of our lives will be seen in a different light. Life will begin to make sense. We will have a reason for getting up, not only this morning but every morning. Moreover, if we

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understand the purpose of our lives, then it will not matter nearly as much what our present circumstances are—whether we are rich or poor, young or old, famous or unknown; whether our jobs are rewarding and fulfilling, or simply something we do to pay the bills. It won't matter as much if we are in good health, or if we are shut-in because of physical disabilities. Neither will it matter so much where we live, what kind of house we live in, or what model car we drive. If we know why we are here on earth, then all those things that trouble so many in our society--money, possessions, power, prestige, sex and glamour—be of little importance. In fact, if we know the real reason for our getting up in the morning, we may even be able to attain the spiritual heights of the apostle Paul. He wrote, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him (Phil. 3:8). According to Paul, all worldly things—money, relationships, power, prestige, politics—are garbage compared to knowing Christ! In addition, Paul wrote, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him [Christ] who gives me strength" (Phil.4:11-13). Paul's words are all the more inspiring when we remember that he wrote them while under house-arrest and chained to a Roman guard twenty-four hours a day! We must not make the common mistake, however, of assuming that this level of spirituality is attainable only by giants of the faith like the apostle Paul. To the contrary, this level of contentment and commitment is available to all of us who understand why we get up in the morning!

So what is the essential, most important reason to get up in the morning? We may be surprised to know that no theological tome need be written to answer the question. We need no courses in philosophy to know the reason for our existence. In reality, the question is not difficult to answer--at least for those who are willing to look to the Holy Scriptures for understanding.

The answer to the question of course, is found in the scripture quoted at the beginning of this article. The reason we get up in the morning—the reason that we are on earth in the first place—is because God wishes to "purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:14). We are here because God is creating a special people that he may love and cherish forever, and who will love and cherish him forever in return. Moreover, God is creating a people who are eager to do good. The essence of goodness is *godliness*. For Christians, God is

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none other than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; he is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). Therefore, *the essence of goodness is Christlikeness*. Thus, the reason we are here on earth is to become people who are like Jesus Christ. He is a mirror that we may look into and see what we are destined to become. This is the purpose of our existence; it is the *real* reason we get up in the morning.

Consider what our lives might be like if we actually lived with an ongoing awareness of the purpose of our existence. How would our daily routines be different if we were continually mindful of our eternal purpose? In the business world, for example, how would an awareness of the eternal purpose of our lives affect our business decisions? Would we conduct business according to the principles of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* or according to the principles of the *Sermon on the Mount*? For those in marketing, would selling be motivated solely by fat commissions and perks, or would the needs of the customer receive primary consideration? For those in manufacturing and construction, would quality and durability become matters of prime concern, or would finding every possible means to cut corners and save a dollar be of paramount importance?

How might our relationships be different if we lived each day with an ongoing commitment to the purpose of our lives? Would our relationships with our spouses and significant others be characterized by getting or by giving? Would our relationships with coworkers be marked by competition and strife or by cooperation and encouragement? In relationships in general, would we look solely to the satisfaction of our own needs, or would we show more concern for the needs of others?

Moreover, if we lived with a radical commitment to our eternal calling, would we really care so much about what kind of car we drive, how big our office is, or where we buy our clothes? Would the petty material concerns of those who live for self rather than God really bother those who live in the light of eternity? Surely, there must be a noticeable difference in the lives of those who live according to eternal purposes and those who live in feverish pursuit of the passing comforts of this world.

To be sure, the reason we get up in the morning will have an overarching influence on the way we conduct our lives. The way we spend our money and our time will be determined not only by transitory needs but also by eternal concerns. Those who live in the light of our eternal purpose will adopt values and practices that are contrary to those of our culture, ones they may even seem strange and odd to those who live according to the values of secular society. Those who live in the light of our eternal destiny will no longer seek fame and self-importance; rather, we will take on the attitude of servants (Phil. 2:5). No longer will we desire power over others; instead, we

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will seek opportunities to serve. No more will we engage in the feverish pursuit of wealth; rather, we will seek occasions to give. We will remember that to be great in the eyes of God is to become a slave; to be first is to be last; to find our lives is to lose them, and to be a king or queen in the kingdom of God is to become servant of all.

Jesus taught us to prioritize all our decisions and activities within the framework of our purpose in life. He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Only those deeds and decisions made in accordance with our eternal destiny will have any lasting significance. All else, even our very lives, will pass away like a mist that appears for a moment and then vanishes (James 4:14).

So why did *you* get up this morning? Was it to pursue the fleeting concerns of this world or to seek first the kingdom of God? Was it to accumulate money and possessions or to store up treasure in heaven? Was it to gratify yourself or was it to serve God and others? The answer matters; it makes a world of difference, not only for today, but forever.

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