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A Life Worth Living

You could die tomorrow. Actually, you could die before you finish this paper. And there will be nothing you can do about it. You can't control it or foresee it; that is God's job. Life is extremely fragile. Just pause for a moment and think about all the things that have to function properly for you to stay alive: your heart, lungs, kidneys, and brain just to name a few. Any one of those vital organs could fail at any second, and your life could end. Would you live any differently if you knew you were going to die tomorrow? Would you focus more on the things that really matter? The truth is, today may really be your last day, and it's time to start living by that reality. In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus declares, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself." These are the things that really matter in life, and I call every Christian to start truly living this out every day.

The basis for living like this is to put aside yourself and realize that this life isn't all about you. Most of us know it's true, but few honestly make it a foundation for the way they live. We like to pretend that everything is about us, but in reality, we are insignificant. God, on the other hand, is magnificent, and everything in our lives is really all about him. In the grand scheme of things, we really don't matter that much. Our lives here on earth are fleeting, and we can't seem to get anything right. We are just a tiny speck on the spectrum of eternity, and without God, our lives are meaningless. Paul writes in Colossians 1:16 that "by him all things were created: things

in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.” God gave us life and he can take it away at any moment. He created us *for him*, not for us. As Rick Warren puts it in his book *The Purpose Driven Life*, “It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads to a dead end” (18). Even atheist Bertrand Russell agrees that “unless you assume a God, the question of life’s purpose is meaningless” (qtd. in Warren 17). We are nothing, and God is everything.

There aren’t enough words in the dictionary to illustrate God’s magnificence; he is completely indescribable. Francis Chan, the author of *Crazy Love*, writes, “Many facets of God expand beyond our comprehension. He cannot be contained in this world, explained by our vocabulary, or grasped by our understanding” (Chan 35). He is holy, which is defined as unique, cut off, or separate. Nothing we can imagine even comes close to representing him. Even God’s tremendously diverse creation only exists to proclaim his glory. “Everything created by God reflects his glory in some way. We see it everywhere, from the smallest microscopic form of life to the vast Milky Way, from sunsets and stars, to storms and seasons” (Warren 53). From galaxies to amoebas to the human mind, it all exists to showcase God. God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present. He is eternal and unchanging. Everything else perishes, “But [God] remain[s] the same and [his] years will never end” (Psalm 102:27). None of us can claim any of these things, yet for some reason we still hold on to the idea that our pitiful lives mean anything outside of a relationship with God.

Our entire lives – our successes and our struggles – are about God. Proverbs 22:4 says, “Humility and fear of the Lord bring wealth and honor and life.” Essentially, success comes from putting aside oneself and living for God alone. Worldly success is meaningless. Still, when we

experience it, we tend to forget who allowed us to be successful in the first place – God. Well-known author Max Lucado writes, “Why are you good at what you do? For God’s sake. Your success is not about what you do. It’s all about him – his present and future glory” (*It’s* 138). Not only are our achievements about God, but our struggles are also. “Your faith in the face of suffering cranks up the volume of God’s song” writes Lucado (*It’s* 126). One person’s suffering can strengthen the faith of countless others, and it also forces the sufferer to rely on God, which most of us forget to do on a moment-to-moment basis. Everything in your life is about God, “and until you understand that, life will never make sense” (Warren 18). God is great, and we simply aren’t, and we need to live it out.

Our great God deserves our complete and sincere love for him. Why? First, he deserves it because of his magnificence. Just as important, we ought to love him because he loves us. And his love, unlike ours, is truly unconditional and unstoppable. Lucado prays,

“Father, your love never ceases. Never. Though we spurn you, ignore you, disobey you, you will not change. Our evil cannot diminish your love. Our goodness cannot increase it. Our faith does not earn it anymore than our stupidity jeopardizes it. You don’t love me less if I fail. You don’t love me more if I succeed. Your love never ceases” (*Bold* 3).

No matter what mistakes we make, God still loves us more than we can fully comprehend.

Romans 8:38-39 says that “neither death nor life, neither angles nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Nothing, not even

ourselves, can separate us from his love. He gave everything for us, even his own life by dying a slow and torturous death on the cross.

This kind of sacrificial love demands more than a dull, empty love from us, yet that is usually the kind of “love” we give him. Revelation 3:15-16 puts it rather bluntly: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” This doesn’t sound like a picture of salvation to me. Francis Chan explains, “To put it plainly, churchgoers who are ‘lukewarm’ are not Christians. We will not see them in heaven” (84). God doesn’t want halfhearted attempts at Christianity: he wants complete devotion, even obsession. “Following Christ isn’t something we can do halfheartedly or on the side. It is not a label we can display when it is useful. It must be central to everything we do and are” (Chan 94). Lukewarm people probably go to church regularly, try to live the good life, and give to God and others as long as it doesn’t inconvenience them too much. When it comes down to it, they really are living for themselves and only following God so they can receive their eternal reward. They aren’t following him because they truly love him.

Devoted people, on the other hand, will give up their entire lives for him; they live in a way that most others, even people who call themselves Christians, think is insane. God wants devotion, not feeble attempts. However, this doesn’t mean that God is expecting us to have a perfect love for him, because we can’t. No matter how hard we try, we’re still only human. But that’s the beauty of God’s love for us. He knows we’ll never measure up to his standards, and he sent Jesus to die for us so that we can still be saved. We just have to accept that gift, and surrender ourselves to it. God gave up everything for us; we should do the same for him. It isn’t

about what you do; it's about where your heart is. But it is what you do that shows where your heart is.

So how do you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind? First, it requires putting aside yourself. Then it requires realizing that true Christianity isn't just a religion – it's a relationship with our creator. Like other relationships, this one requires time, commitment, communication, and thought. The Bible says, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). With God, we can have continuous communication through prayer. Prayer isn't something you do before you go to bed. Prayer is a lifestyle; every waking moment should be a prayer. We should always be thinking about God and what he has done for us. Truly loving God also requires surrendering your entire life to him. According to Rick Warren, we can surrender to God and please him by loving him sincerely, trusting him always, obeying him devotedly, praising him at all times, and using our abilities for his glory (69-76). As E. Stanley Jones once said, “If you don't surrender to Christ, you surrender to chaos” (qtd. in Warren 82). Lastly but just as importantly, we demonstrate our love for God by loving the other people he has created.

Loving other people is extremely important for a multitude of reasons. Most importantly, “We love because he first loved us... And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:19-21). These verses make two crucial points; the first is that we should love others because God loves us. “God loves you. Perfectly. Powerfully. Passionately. Others have promised and failed but God has promised and succeeded. He loves you with an unfailing love. And his love – if you let it – can fill you and leave you with a love worth giving” (Lucado, *Love* 10). God loves us no matter what, and he loves everyone around us just as much. He doesn't play favorites, and neither should we.

The second point made in the above verses is that we should love others because God commands us to. Jesus teaches, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). These two commandments are placed next to each other for a reason. By stating the two greatest commandments together, “Christ is connecting the command to ‘love God’ with the command to ‘love your neighbor.’ By loving ‘the least of these,’ we are loving God himself” (Chan 118). We can’t love God without loving other people! This has eternal implications as well. In Matthew 25:34-46, Jesus tells a story about two groups of people. The first group helped those less fortunate, and Jesus said that what they were doing for others, they were actually doing for him. The second group neglected others, and they were therefore neglecting Jesus himself. About those people, he said, “They will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). Loving other people isn’t just a suggestion; it’s a commandment. Faith, not works, brings us salvation, but it is our actions that demonstrate whether we truly live by faith or not. To sincerely love God, we must truly love the people he has created.

Most people don’t understand what true love for others looks like. We are to love others in the way God loves us; that is, unconditionally. According to the book *The Love Dare*, “[God] doesn’t love us because we are loveable but because he is so loving” (Kendrick 47). Many of the people we come across probably don’t seem all that worthy of love, but we are called to love them anyway. We certainly are not loveable, but God still chooses to love us. We are also to love others unselfishly, giving up our own wants and needs in order to fulfill others’ wants and needs. “Love is never satisfied except in the welfare of others” (Kendrick 12). Kendrick said nothing about making oneself happy, only that we should be concerned with other people. The opposite

of love is not hate, and it is not indifference. It is selfishness. Paul writes in Philippians, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (2:3). So what does this unconditional, unselfish love look like? One of the most well-known passages in the Bible describes ideal love:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

These words describe the core of loving others unlike any other verses do, and we are to strive to be all of those things that love is. Try putting your name in place of the word “love,” and you’ll soon realize that you are lying, but put in “Christ in (your name)” in its place and find that the statement is true. This is to be our goal: to let Christ live out his love through us.

Well, it looks like you survived long enough to read this entire paper, but don’t forget that your life could still end at any second. Even if you live to be one hundred years old, your life in this world will still be smaller than a particle of dust compared to the rest of time. Our lives are unbelievably short, but the things we do in this life have repercussions throughout all of eternity. The only things that will matter after we die are the things we did for God. So don’t waste your life reaching for your own hopes and dreams. Live and die with hope and purpose – God’s purpose.

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