

Week 3 (Jan 26 + 28)

“Meaning, Happiness, & Hope”

“What’s the meaning of life?” We think of it as the biggest question anyone can ask. The strange thing is before secularism, it wasn’t a problem. You find meaning by discovering a meaning that is already there, provided by a Creator. But when someone rejects religion, they have only one of two options: either settle for trying to make meaning yourself or try to live without it.

Think about that: a rational person thinking the most rational thing you can do is avoid the question. Ignore the feeling that you have—or should have—a purpose. It’s hard to do. Making your own meaning isn’t much easier. It tends to be all about you and how you exercise your freedoms, making freedom itself the meaning of life. But that can’t be it. It doesn’t make sense.

Our best efforts to make our own meaning tend to be narcissistic, self-refuting, and easily upset. Suffering is great at challenging the meanings we’ve made for ourselves.

What about being happy? Can’t that be the meaning of life? Well, what is happiness? How do we get it? The secular approach says don’t worry, just enjoy it. Remember life isn’t that bad. If you do things that matter and make progress on your goals, you’ll be happy, satisfied.

The problem is we aren’t satisfied. Tom Brady can win enough Super Bowl rings to fill one hand and still be confronted with the feeling that this can’t be it. There’s got to be more than this. Is there anything that will really satisfy? Anything that will last?

Week 3 (Jan 26 + 28) - Meaning, Happiness, & Hope (cont.)

Or we might think of it this way: 'what hope do we have? Why bother waking up tomorrow if I create my own meaning and if happiness comes and goes so easily?' Keller writes, "Hope asserts the goodness of life in the face of its limitations." We might get excited that we can make progress as a society, but there's no hope for us, personally. Once you're dead, that's it.

The secular answer is there is no personal hope, no lasting happiness, no real meaning. You're better off not asking these questions! Unless you're ready to consider Jesus. You see, the Bible teaches that you are not a cosmic accident; you were made intentionally by a loving God, who has a purpose for your life and the lives of those around you. He gives us meaning. Our desire to be happy isn't some random evolutionary survival tool. You were made to be in an everlasting, loving, fulfilling relationship with God. And we have hope because death is not the end. Once you turn to Jesus Christ in faith, you are rescued from your sins, and just as He was raised from the dead to everlasting life, so you will be, too. Christianity calls you to a meaning, happiness, and hope that never ends and can endure anything.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

If you polled your friends or coworkers, what would they say is the meaning of life?

What do you think would happen if you asked someone "what are you living for?" and "how's that working out for you?"

Have you ever chased happiness and been disappointed? What were you chasing and why?

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What does it mean for you personally to find your meaning, happiness, and hope in Christ?

What Bible verses do you turn to that help remind you of what's most important?

NOTES FROM PERSONAL REFLECTION + GROUP DISCUSSION