



CENTER FOR STEWARDSHIP

# *Your Story - Living for the Neighbor: Stewardship Equals Responsible Christian Living*

## INTRODUCTION

In some Christian traditions, a personal testimony is a part of a believer's faith life. Every Christian, it is assumed, should have at the ready a "faith journey" that is intended to be not only an engaging biographical narrative, but also a compelling appeal for others to consider the claims of the Christian faith. The value and suitable use of personal testimonies can be debated, but two things, at least, are not up for debate: it is essential that every follower of Christ is ready and able to speak the truths of faith, and a believer should give some thought to things of faith that make a difference in the believer's life.

**If you were telling someone what you consider the greatest benefits and joys of being a Christian, what would you include? In the wider culture, what are some of the things that people use to bring meaning and direction to their lives?**

In the western world, many people struggle to find meaning and purpose for their lives. Emptiness and futility result when it is determined that there is no ultimate truth that holds for all people in all times and all places. One does not need to be an academic to have given careful thought to the claims and implications of non-foundationalism, postmodernity, subjectivism, pluralism, and nihilism to understand how they work and feel in real life. Even the person who has never heard of any of those things knows that people today choose what they want to believe, and that truth is not universal.

While it might seem that unbounded freedom and limitless avenues of exploration would foster personal development and enrichment, the actual result has been a crisis of meaning. If there is no ultimate truth, and the

only available truths are those that are self-chosen, then meaning is fabricated and artificial. If a person builds a life on a truth selected with no more reason than personal taste or the influence of others, then it ultimately doesn't matter at all—and the person knows it. This is the upshot of a world that declares that all truth is relative and that the truth about truth is that truth depends. A life without meaning is a problem and leads to things like immorality, irresponsibility, and suicide.

Admittedly, the majority of society is not obsessing over questions about meaning, or debating the best method of ending a meaningless life. Although most people will parrot the world's wisdom and assert the relativity of meaning and the subjectivity of truth, their lives somehow escape the logical conclusion of their convictions. They do not collapse in despair. Instead, they busy themselves with life; they immerse themselves in the wealth of pleasures that western culture has to offer; they champion a cause or an institution and act as if everything makes sense and counts. But, it doesn't. If there is no absolute truth, then life has no meaning. Christians know this.

The joy of knowing the meaning and purpose of life is a great gift—one that we in the church often take for granted. This study will consider what Scripture has to say about the world's problem of finding meaning and will offer the clear answer that God gives about the meaning of life . . . and that is the very heart of stewardship.

## Q &amp; A

- 1 Read the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:13-21. Jesus taught this parable to warn against greed. What does the parable also teach us about the fragility and potential futility of life?
- 2 In what ways might Jesus's parable impact the way that Christians think about retirement? How should a Christian think about the fool's attitude, "take you ease, eat, drink, and be merry"?
- 3 Ecclesiastes 2 is a rather bleak assessment of the various efforts that people typically make in an attempt to find significance and meaning in life. Read the chapter. What three typical sources of meaning does Solomon consider? What is your evaluation of his consistent assessment of each?
- 4 Read Psalm 39:4-6. How do you react to the blunt words? How does reaching such a sober conclusion about life's transience and apparent futility serve a positive function in leading us to live a life that matters? What role does verse 7 play?
- 5 Lest we collapse in frustration in the face of Scripture's bleak appraisal of human life, turn to Genesis 1:28. How does the first great commission provide a potent answer to the question about life's meaning?
- 6 Turn to the familiar text, Matthew 28:19-20. How does this directive from Jesus fit your understanding of the meaning and purpose of life?
- 7 How do your vocational responsibilities within creation provide opportunities to fulfill the second great commission?
- 8 Read Matthew 25:14-30. In what way is Jesus's parable applicable to our vocational responsibilities? How will the fulfillment of God's will vary from person to person?
- 9 Finally, read I Corinthians 15:58. What comfort do these words hold for believers striving to live their lives in conformity with God's purpose?
- 10 How will the truth of Christ provide meaning for your life and sharpen the direction of your work and pursuits in the days ahead?

## PRAYER

*Praise God for the good gift of vocations and for the comfort and assurance that comes with knowing one's purpose and being able to pursue it with the confidence that, within God's plan, it does matter.*