WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 75
Happiness and Security: Where Does It Come From?
by Ernest O'Neill

What is the meaning of life? That is, why are you here? What is the purpose of your existence? We're discussing that, especially in the light of the explanation given by the only man who has ever left the earth and has come back to tell us what is out there. That is the man known as Jesus of Nazareth.

He's the only human being who has ever broken the death barrier. He's the only religious leader who has ever avoided being buried in the ground and his bones decaying like other human beings. He's the only one who has given us any kind of assurance that He actually was from outer space. That's why we've been actually discussing his words, because we think they're the only ones worth listening to in regard to the cosmic question, "Why is the earth in existence?" and "Why are you here on it?"

One of the things, you remember, over the past few weeks that we've been sharing is that Jesus said, "Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh." That is, it's just flesh. It will never inherit the kingdom of God. Of course, we know that in our hearts. Yet, He followed up that statement by saying, "You will not believe that." He's dead right; you know you and I don't really believe that. We do deep down feel we were made not to go out like a light and be buried under some gravestone. We do, don't we?!

Even the most skeptical and cynical among us feel we were made for something to do with eternity. I mean, there seems to be something of eternity inside us. We feel we were made for the security of eternity and we feel we were made for the sense of value and self-esteem and self-worth that eternity would give.

We certainly feel we were made for happiness, don't we? It's amazing.

We know that this world is miserably unhappy. Around about us is misery on all sides and yet you know we all spend day after day seeking happiness, don't we? We're always looking for it. We're always trying to get happiness. That's why the heroin stuff is going. That's why crack is going. That's why all the drugs are going. That's why alcohol is so popular. That's why sex is so popular. We're dying for happiness. I mean, we just feel...we were made to be happy, in spite of the fact that most of it goes like a soap bubble. It just disappears in our hands and we're left with a wet smear.

Yet, we still think we were made for happiness. We still try to find happiness. Somehow we're always looking for it and we try to use relationships to find that moment of intimacy that will give us the happiness we want. We try to get the fastest motorcycle, the fastest racing car. We try to get the best plane, or the best water skies or the best vacation or the best holiday. You know how we live for the holidays. We just live for the Fridays. We thank God it's Friday. We just live for the weekends. We can't wait until we get out of work.

Many of us have miserable times at work, because we're thinking all the time of when we'll get off work. Many of us go to the pub, because we're hoping we'll somehow get happiness there. Many of us go to movies; many of us go to dances. Many of us go to all kinds of experiences, because we're hoping that somehow, we'll reach that pinnacle of excitement, that orgasm that will give us absolute happiness, that eternal moment when ....what is it we're looking for?

Well, you know, probably, what we look for is not just the orgasm. Probably what we're looking for is not just the physical thrill, but

we're hoping that somehow we will be completely known by someone and completely accepted. We know deep down that happiness does not come from a "high" that is chemically induced. Happiness does not come from a "high" that is physically produced. Happiness actually comes from an eternal moment when we feel we are absolutely and utterly known and loved. That is the time when time seems to stand still.

We're constantly looking for that. Many of us have given up on it, and have tried to substitute other things. But we still know that happiness really consists, not of even circumstances that go well so much as a relationship that is utterly and absolutely intimate and honest and satisfying. That's what we're looking for. Yet we never seem to be able to find it.

Most of us, of course, have actually declined into just trying to get circumstances that are satisfactory. So we get up in the morning and you know how our little eyes and minds go out to the day ahead searching to see if we have some unpleasant things coming up, or, if by any chance, there might be something pleasant coming up. So we're utterly the slaves of circumstances.

Most of us are utterly dominated by that. And we live from little "high" to little "high", from little holiday to little holiday, from little weekend to little weekend. We are allowing ourselves to be drawn in to that deception. We know it's a deception. It's a lie that happiness consists of favorable circumstances. Of course, old Dr. Samuel Johnson, you remember, the old English writer, said we always think that if we could only change our circumstances, then we would be happy. If we could only have our circumstances different from what we are, we would be happy. Yet, we know that that isn't true, but we spend most of our lives following after that mirage.

What Jesus said, of course, was what we know. He said happiness is not satisfactory circumstances. People in the most miserable circumstances -- as you know from your own parents' and grandparents' examples -- people from the most miserable circumstances, even in concentration camps, even in prisons, even in the midst of war, people can be tremendously happy. Happiness consists not of favorable circumstances, but of knowing that you are known and loved by someone who is absolutely honest with you and by someone who is absolutely the center of the meaning of the universe.

That is, of course, what Jesus said that we really needed. He said what you really need to know is that the Maker, the Creator of the stars, the Maker of the Milky Way, the Maker of the Amazon River, the Maker of the Black Forest and the Ardennes, the Maker of the Thames and the English Channel, the Maker of the Atlantic and the Pacific, the Maker of whales, and the Maker of eagles, the Maker of integers, the Maker of all the mathematical equations and all the theories that we put together in our scientific reasonings -- that Maker knows you.

He loves you. That's what He said. Jesus said, "If a man loves me he will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." That's what He said! He said, "My Father will love you and come to you and make His home inside you and will actually love you as a dear and true friend.

In another place, he said, "Your Father, the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father. I came from the Father and I have come into the world. Again I am leaving the world and going to the Father. My Father loves you. He loves you!" There's no thrill as great as walking through the garden of the world with the owner of the world beside you. That's what makes real happiness. What

Jesus said was, you're trying to get happiness from things, things, things or circumstances, circumstances. You're trying to get happiness from things that can't give you happiness.

Circumstances will never be exactly right for you...not in this world. They'll always be slightly wrong. But, anyway, what gives you happiness is not circumstances, but knowing that the one "significant other" in the whole universe knows you and loves you. You are safe in that Person's love. That's what makes real happiness. And Jesus explained to us, "Stop looking to circumstances for happiness." Happiness does not come from what happens to you. Happiness comes from a deep joy of being known completely, even as you know someone else. That kind of happiness is yours, because My Father, the Maker of the world, loves you. He loves you.