WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 100
Slave to People's Opinions
by Ernest O'Neill

Why do you find it difficult at times to say what you really think? You may answer, "Oh, well, I'm just not very good at expressing myself." But I think at other times you'd answer, "Well, I don't know how it will be taken. I don't know how people will take it. I frankly don't know what attitude they'll take to me after I say what I think. So I tend to keep quiet about things till I see the drift of the conversation and the kind of people I'm with."

"If I'm in a pub, or if I'm in a coffee house, or if I'm in a home or at a party, I tend to keep an eye out and see the way the wind is blowing and then in the light of that, I express the part of myself that will fit in with that." That seems to be the case with many of us, doesn't it? We have ourselves inside the being that we really are, the person that we really are, and then we have all our relationships and our associations outside and "never the twain shall meet" almost.

At least it seems to be rare that we get into a situation where we can really be what we really are. Of course, the upshot of this fact is we tend to become what we are not. We tend to lose ourselves. We tend to lose our own identity. Often, that's what creates an identity crisis for us. We begin to wonder, "Who am I, anyway? I seem to be just a little chameleon that fits in with the surrounding environment and that changes my colors according to the vegetation that I find myself in."

"I seem to be almost like a disguised person who is always trying to fit into the background so that I won't be noticed. Yet, I definitely want to be noticed." So we find ourselves a strange combination, as Shakespeare said, of opposites, of

contradictions, of wanting to be noticed and not wanting to be noticed, of wanting to be ourselves, of not wanting to be ourselves, of wanting people to see that we're different, of not wanting people to see we're different.

We are contradictions. We are enigmas, even to ourselves. Where does this problem come from? Well, what we have been sharing is that it comes from the fact that most of us are living the wrong way around. We're living outside in instead of inside out. We were meant, originally, to live from the inside. That is, from what we really are inside. We're meant to live from the inside out. In actual fact, most of us live from the outside in. We were meant to live in friendship with the Person that made us and put us on this world.

You have a Creator that made you. That's why you have those remarkable eyes and that incredible brain that you possess, better than any microcomputer that we have yet created or invented. It's because you were made by a Creator who actually knows you, knows your name and loves you and wants to live your life together with you. He intended to have such a close friendship with you, that you would have direction within yourself. You would be able to act from within, from the person you really are in Him.

In that way, you would begin to act out through the rest of your personality to the world and would begin to contribute things to the world. But, of course, what you and I have done is forget all that stuff. We have decided there is no Creator; there's just ourselves and the world and we have begun to try to live off the world itself. Of course, we have such needs inside ourselves for value, for self-worth, for purity, for happiness that we end up slaves to the world and to circumstances to get those things.

That's why we end up in that position where we cannot be ourselves with people. We end up trying to fit in with the environment, trying to fade into the background, trying to say in a conversation what will please the rest and we end up not being ourselves at all. We end up, actually, being dominated by the world of people around us and the world of things and the world of circumstances. So we become these perverted little personalities that were made to work from the inside out, but now have become so enslaved by habit and by practice that we can only work from the outside in.

That's why when you try to be yourself, you can't. That's why, when you want to express what you really think, you can't -- through fear of what other people will think. It's because you actually still want to live the way the Creator made you to live, but your personality itself becomes so trained and so tamed and so dominated by the things and the circumstances and the people in the world that it works from the outside in. That's why you feel such a clash. You know how it goes.

You come into a situation in the office where there's some discussion going on and you have a viewpoint and you want to express it. But your little eyes are so trained to look at other people's faces and see what they're thinking of you, and see whether they approve, that you've hardly begun to open your mouth on your own opinion, but you're looking to see if they're approving of it. Are their eyes hearing what you want them to hear, or are they hearing what they want themselves to hear? Are they pleased or displeased with what you're saying? Before you know it, your convictions are being suppressed by your desire to please them and to be approved of.

So often it's the same with our worries and our anxieties. You want to be free from worry; you want to be free from anxiety. You're made, actually, to be absolutely confident that your

Creator, the Father of the Universe, will provide with all the things you need.

That's what His Son said, "My God shall supply every need of yours from His riches"...everything you need! We want to believe that. There's something inside us that says, "Yes, life will work right. And our God will supply us with what we need." But word comes to us that we're in overdraft in the bank, or word comes to us that we need a new engine for the car, or word comes we've had a disaster at home, or that we have a sickness that has to be treated by expensive drugs, and suddenly we're thrown into anxiety and fret and worry that keeps us awake at night.

It's interesting. We find that we want to rest. We say to ourselves, let me go to sleep. Let me rest. Let me hand these things over. Let me let them be, until tomorrow. I can't do anything about tonight. But there's something in our personality, there's almost a law in our personalities that makes us operate the other way, and makes us worry and we say to ourselves, "Now, work it out! Work it out! Think through it. Think through it. If you can only think through it, you'll find an answer."

So we find a battle that goes on inside ourselves, a battle in our own personalities. It's almost as if we're going through that Jekyll and Hyde experience, you remember, that is talked about in that novel. That Jekyll and Hyde that Robert Louis Stevenson described where Dr. Jekyll has a certain responsibility and a certain respectability and a certain character of integrity, but Mr. Hyde was like a monster that seems to overcome him increasingly.

So we find in ourselves there is an urge within us that still operates the way we were meant to operate, but it is increasingly overwhelmed as the years pass by, by a Jekyll-personality, a savage being that seems to be what we have become. In other

words, it's interesting, but our personalities seem to work against us. It seems as if we're divided people. It's as if we're schizophrenics.

There's part of us...there's the real us that wants to be or do something, and there's a personality that we have developed that we wear like a coat that seems to suppress and work the other way. Let's talk a little tomorrow about this enigma, this Jekyll and Hyde personality that we have in our lives. Is there any way to get free from that? Yes, there is. But we need to discuss it and to understand it. Let's do that tomorrow.