WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 195
We Need to be Changed Within
by Ernest O'Neill

What is the meaning of life? That's the question that we're discussing on this program each day. And we've reached the point in our conversation where we have determined that the One who is able to give us the best explanation of the meaning of life has to be someone who has been off this world. That is, has been off it and has been far enough off it to get beyond the furthest planet that we are able to perceive with our radio telescopes and has gone beyond the end of infinity, and has got to the point where He is able to communicate with the Creator, or the Maker, or the Supreme Being that produced the world and produced you and me.

And we have concluded, of course, that there's only one candidate for that, and that is the incredible human being that lived in the first century of our era, and showed that He was able to break through death and come back through the barrier whenever He chose. That is that Person that we all look to as an example of an ethical life, the man Jesus of Nazareth. And we've been listening or studying His explanation of the meaning of life. And you remember how we've shared that our present situation or our present condition is one that He gives a very reasonable explanation of.

Our present condition of course, is your own condition. It's your own state at this time. And you're probably the same as the rest of us. You depend utterly for your sense of security in this world on what you can get of the food, and the shelter and the clothing in the world for yourself by your own efforts. That's why most of us try to get a good education, so that we can get a good job, so that we can get the money that will provide us with the food we

need to keep alive, and the clothing that we need to keep us warm, and the shelter of a home or an apartment that we need to keep the rain off our heads.

And we depend usually for that security that we have, that physical security; we depend on the money that we earn at our jobs. Or, if we're children, we depend on our parents. If we're employees, we eventually come to depend on the company and usually on the boss, or on the person that we have to please to keep our jobs. And so, most of us have found that our lives end up being very dependent on the people that we ourselves depend on to get the money we need to establish our physical and material security. The result, of course, is that most of us have become little robots.

We will do anything to please the people that give us the money. We like to say, "No! No, we're not!" We're very proud, actually. We're very independent people. But deep down, when the stock market totters, we see where our security lies. And if the job is about to be lost, it's amazing how our great convictions tumble so fast and all our personal dignity is willing to be bartered for, well, I suppose that old "mess of potage". Because we say, "Well, without the mess of potage I won't be here to barter at all, so what does it matter?"

And so often, we're utterly dependent for our security, on the people that give us the money and so we will do anything to satisfy and please them. So most of us are the same in regard to another great need we have. And that is the need for some kind of self-esteem. Most of us feel we're unique. We don't know why we feel we're unique but we do feel unique, and yet nobody else notices it. And so, we try to establish our uniqueness in all kinds of other eyes.  We try to do it in our wife's eyes by being a good provider, in our children's eyes by being an outstanding father and by seeming to be the source of all wisdom and knowledge.

And we try to be it in our peers' eyes by achieving something that they will admire, or that they will look up to. And so most of us have come to the point where we'll do anything to get attention. We'll do anything to please. We'll do anything to get somebody to think we're worth something. If we're standing often in a bar or in a restaurant, we'll somehow find a way to turn the conversation round to something that we're quite brilliant at, so that we'll be able to receive a few compliments.

And most of us feel the superficiality of our lives, and the bluffness of our lives. And sometimes we go home at night and almost can't stand the look of ourselves. We've become such little performing monkeys. In fact, we feel, "Is there any me there?" We seem to be just a shell. There's hardly anything inside. And sometimes we determine, "We must stop this! We must stop depending on people just because they give us money. We must stop depending on the company just because it provides the security we need. We must stop depending on the bank account or getting worried every time it goes down. We must stop trying to please people just to get satisfaction. We must be ourselves."

And often, we say, "I'm going to be myself tomorrow." And then we find that there's no self any longer in there. There's a selfishness, but there's no me. It seems as if I've lost the sense of who I used to be. And that's what Jesus said would happen to us. That's why I say He speaks to our condition. He speaks exactly to the problem we have. He said, "No wonder - you've tried to depend on everybody but the only One who's interested in you being yourself." None of the rest are interested in you being yourself. They're all interested in you doing what they want you to do.

There's only One who really cares about you in a deep way, and who really wants you to be yourself. That's the One who made you. That's why He made you different from everybody else. And that's why He has a vested interest in your staying different from everybody else. So He's the only one who's really interested in your really being yourself. And He's the only one that can do anything about the fact that you're now dead, because that's what you are. You've died inside, and you've become a shell of what you were meant to be. You've become a robot.

You've become conformed to the image of the rest of the world. And the only way to come alive again inside is to ask Him to make you alive inside. That is, to recreate you as He originally made you; to enable you, kind of, as it were, to be "born again." And of course, what we've said is, Jesus was once explaining this to a Jewish scholar in the first century, and the Jewish scholar said, "What? Do you mean I have to enter into my mother's womb and be born over again?" And Jesus said, "No, no! You can't do that!"

But He said it and you might want to look it up sometime. It's in the Bible, in the New Testament. And it's in a book called the Gospel of John, and it's chapter three. And He said to him, "No, no you can't do that! You have to be born from above. It has to be an invisible thing that the Maker of the universe does in you." And of course, He can do all kinds of invisible things. There's nothing to do with visibility to determine that a thing is real. Many things are real that are invisible. Love is real and is invisible. The wind is real and you can only see the effects of it on trees or on things that it blows around.

So He is invisible, but He is able to do an invisible thing inside you. He is able to make you alive inside. He is able to make your spirit come alive. Your spirit is the real you. It's you as you really are. And He's able to make you alive inside if you will first of all,

believe that what Jesus explains to us about it is true. And that's the first thing He said. He said to this guy, Nicodemus, "Look, you first have to believe that this is the situation." And of course, you agree. It's not hard to believe it when we follow through with how we've come to this point, where we've become hollow men or empty shells or robots. That's the first step.

Then Jesus said that the second thing is you have to change your whole way of living. Your whole mind has to be changed. You have to change your mind about whose opinion really matters. Is it your boss's, or is it the One who made you? Is it your parents', or is it the One who made you? Is it somebody who will die maybe before you do, or is it the One who will be alive until the end of time? You have to change your mind about whose opinion really counts. You have to change your mind about who you depend on for security.

Is it your boss, or is it the Man who made your boss? Is it your company, or the One who made your company?  Jesus said, first of all you have to change your mind. That's what the Greek word mean: "metanoia". It's "meta"...turn and "noia"... is mind. It's "change your mind". So, you have to believe what He said, and then you have to change your mind, and change the way you're living. Let's talk a little more about that tomorrow, to see if we can help each other to understand it and perhaps to begin to change our minds. Let's talk about this tomorrow.