WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?
Program 205
It’s Possible for Us to Start Over
by Ernest O'Neill

Have you ever wondered, "Is there any me left?" That is, is there anything real of me left inside at all? Particularly after you've bowed to somebody else's will for about the forty-fifth time, or you've done what your boss asked you to do even though you didn't believe you should, or you've done something to please the wife and the children and you really didn't think it was the best thing to do.

And you think for a moment sitting in the car, or at home in the study, is there anything left inside of who I really am? Many of us in these days have that problem. The pressures of the media are so strong and the organization, the tight organization of our commercial world, and even our professional academic world, is so intense that we find ourselves, whether we like it or not, in the position of the victims in "Animal Farm" or in Orwell's "1984".

And we find that we are constrained and compelled by all kinds of external pressures, external forms, the "things to do", the "in" things to do, the swinging things to do, the yuppie things to do, the sophisticated things to do, the professional things to do, the domestic things to do, the things that a good husband would do, the things that a good son would do -- so many things press in upon us urging us that we ought to do this or we ought to do that, or we ought to be this or we ought to be that, that many of us have lost all sense of whether we really have anything inside that is uniquely us.

And of course, we've been saying in these discussions that we've been having during this year that this has been intensified by our own attitude. Because we ourselves have in fact got

ourselves into this position. We've done it by taking the unrealistic viewpoint that there is no Creator. Despite the order and design evident in the universe we've taken the position that the whole thing is the result of time plus chance, or of a directionless, unprogrammed evolutionary process, and so we are left in the position where there's nobody to look after us but ourselves.

And indeed we've been encouraged to think that from our earliest days. Moreover, we see four billion other people around who don't realize how absolutely unique we are and we set about trying to make them realize our uniqueness. And then of course we realize that we're here for only a short time so we'd better make the most of it, so we grab madly at any piece of happiness that we can find. And in the pursuit of this sense of security that we feel we need, and this sense of self-esteem that we feel we need, and this happiness that we can't do without, we have actually ourselves become little robots.

We do what is supposed to bring us security. We become actually the slaves of our own drive for security. We will do anything to hold our job or to keep the salary up or to keep from actually going down in salary. And we'll become any kind of little performing animal that somebody wants us to become just so we keep the shekels rolling in.

It's the same with self-esteem and self-worth. It's incredible how much individuality we are prepared to give up just to get the approval of other people or the esteem of our peers. And so we have contributed to this ourselves, until many of us are at the point where we hardly know whether there is anybody at home or not.

We don't really know who we are. What we've been saying is part of us has died -- not our mind, not our emotions, not our will-

- they're all alive -- not our body, it's all alive -- but our spirit. The spirit is the very unique thing that is you yourself. It's the very essence of you. It's you that is different from everybody else that ever has been in the universe, everybody that will ever be in the universe, and everybody that is in the universe now. Your spirit is the you that is unique and different. And what we've been sharing is of course that the One that made you, the Maker Himself, made you unique.

He made you unique. Because He wants to have a relationship with you of love. He wants you actually to be His friend and His child -- His son or His daughter. He wants to love you and He wants you to love Him and that's why He made you unique. You're the only version -- He doesn't want a whole lot of the "sames", He wants friends, He wants people who are real and different. And He made you to be like Himself in a unique way and that's why you're on earth. And so He has a vested interest in getting you back to what you used to be.

And you remember Wordsworth's poem, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy, shades of the prison house begin to close around the growing boy." In fact when you're a little child there is something that is alive and unique in you. You don't know any better, you don't know enough to suppress your own beliefs or your own ideas to please somebody else. You just are yourself. You're just spontaneously you. That's what Wordsworth meant. At the very beginning it's as if our little spirits are somehow alive -- actually they're not very alive, that's the reality of it. They're not very alive.

But the Creator allows something of the uniqueness that the spirit used to have to be in you as a child so that you sense there is some wonderful, innocent, spontaneous, joyous life that you can enter into. And that's His plan for you. And so most of us have more a sense of our spirits when we're children than at any

other time. But throughout our lives we do sense at times, through our conscience, that we ought to do something and we do it and we find a little life coming up inside. Sometimes we have intuition that we should do something and we do it and we find there's a little life inside.

Sometimes we sense that there is a Creator, and we sense as we walk by a pond a great sense of a Presence with us -- and that's communion. And it's our spirits wriggling a little, trying to push up into life. But usually our spirits are absolutely dead and suppressed and our minds and emotions go blindly on, doing what they've been programmed to do, copying everybody else day after day. Usually, in fact, they don't direct us very much -- it's our body that directs us. We're usually little animals.

We do everything according to what piece of clothing we want to buy to cover our bodies or what food we want to get. That's why most of us live from a little of breakfast treat to a little bit of lunch treat to a little bit of dinner treat. And we're governed primarily by what happens to our bodies. But the Creator Himself has a vested interest in bringing our spirits to life. And the first condition He needs us to fulfill for that to happen -- and it can happen in you -- is for you to believe. That's the first thing. That's what His Son Jesus said.

He said first of all believe this. Believe that what I say is true. Believe that all I've told you about My Father and Him making you so that you could be His child as I am -- believe that that's true. Believe that there is a God, believe there's a Creator; believe not only that but He's intelligent and He's personal, and not only that but He actually loves you and He wants you to be His friend and He wants you to love Him and to trust Him. Believe that. Begin to believe that.

Stop believing the lie that there is no Creator. Stop believing the lie that evolution occurred just by itself. If there was an evolutionary process there has to be somebody who determined that it would evolve from simple to complex. There has to be some mind behind it. So stop believing that there's nothing out there and start believing that there is a God. That's the first step.

I don't know if you've ever taken that step. I don't know if you've just taken the attitude that most of us have that it's old-fashioned, that it's out of date, that it's religious, that it's evangelical, that it's mad American, that it's wild Catholic, it's something ecclesiastical or Episcopal to believe.

I don't know what you think, but throw all that out of the window and believe! Begin to examine the life of this Man, Jesus of Nazareth. Go to the British Museum -- see the Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Sinaiticus. See that the documentary evidence that gives us the record of His life is far better than what we have for Caesar or for Plato or for Lucretius, and believe that He is actually the Son of the Maker of the world.

And then believe what He says is true -- that there is up there -- if you look up at this moment , you know if you can see the sky, I don't know if you can, but if you can see the sky, believe that behind that there is a dear Creator who made you and who actually loves you and who wants you to be His friend, and who wants you to be His son or daughter and to live with Him forever, and to help Him to develop the rest of this universe after this life is over. The first step is believe.

That's the first step in enabling Him to begin to bring your spirit alive, because He won't bring you alive unless you want to become alive. See that. He wants you to have free will. He wants you to have it the way you want it because you're of no use to

Him unless you have free will and have the dignity of a free person who can love freely. So the first step is to believe.

Why don't you begin today? It's as easy to believe as not. Why not take that first step today? And let's talk about the second one tomorrow.