

Introduction

When I was about 12 years old, I came to the point of asking these questions, "Why does the earth exist? Why does anything exist anyway?" Because I was so frustrated at not knowing the answers to my questions, it drove me to tears. I've since learned that this is called an existential crisis. It is a giant lack of perspective, with facts about purpose missing. Most human beings have a need for purpose. So why are we here? And why is here, here? Beyond that, how should we proceed after we learn the basic answers to these questions?

My folks had always dragged me off to church and Sunday school, but I don't recall that anyone explained to me why the earth, or humans, or anything existed, or that church and God and all of that was really, really important. Maybe it was supposed to be obvious, but as a kid, it wasn't obvious to me. If they had told me, then I must not have been listening. It just wasn't impressed upon me. The truth is that God is more than important! God and God's vision and plan have everything to do with our future. And we're talking about a whole lot of future. One way of thinking about that future is suggested by the slogan of the animated movie character Buzz Lightyear.

"To infinity and beyond!" -Buzz Lightyear, Toy Story character

I know I hadn't paid much attention in Sunday school, because I remember feeling blindsided by a Sunday school test on which almost all of the questions were about some guy named Jesus Christ. Why was He so important that most of the questions were about Him? After all, what about all those other guys they talked about like Noah, Daniel, and Jonah? I am so thankful that I have had my questions about existence answered, and that I can now answer many questions about Jesus Christ. In fact, I speak to Him and His Father every day.

But this world is full of folks who know little to nothing about God. Some doubt the existence of God. Angels, both the faithful ones and the rebellious ones, know they were created by God, and they know that humans were created by God for God's special purpose.

Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring. -Mal 2:15 (first part)

Some humans are not sure how they came to be. Some think they may have evolved. But one of these days, their thinking will have to evolve. In fact, it seems that the state of the world is presently devolving. Too many folks devote too little time to learn what might happen to them after they die, and in turn, do not think very much about how they should be living now.

Christian Worldview

The private school, where our daughter has attended, wants all of their students to graduate with a Christian worldview. And I agree that young men and women should conduct their lives from that perspective. The alternatives include a worldly worldview, as it were, as well as worldviews established by various other religions and philosophies. The Christian worldview is broadly that God created the world and mankind for His good purposes, and that it is of present and future benefit to live according to the Bible. To really maintain such a worldview, I believe that a personal relationship with God through prayer is an absolute necessity. Lacking that relationship, many young folks are drawn into worldly living. Too many folks of all ages are Christians in name only, and not zealous about their faith.

One's worldview can be thought of as one's paradigm. A paradigm is defined as a pattern, model, or structure. It is also defined as a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices which add up to how one views reality. In fact, the meaning of the word translated "truth" in the Bible has the meaning of "reality." The truth always wins. Other ideas don't pan out. If we all have the same spirit and generally

the same beliefs, we should all be sharing a similar paradigm - a similar reality and world view. But similar is as close as we'll get in this life. You have probably heard the phrase "like minds." But really, the best we can achieve among a group of people is "similar minds." We look forward to God bringing us into an amazing and wonderful paradigm in a future spiritual phase of our existence. Then we'll have like minds. But more important, in my opinion, is to have "like hearts." Since God judges by the heart, good hearts are what He really hopes to see develop within His children.

Many folks in this world, while they physically live in the same world as ourselves, live in paradigms quite different from our own. They attribute a different weight to what is and is not important. They have different goals, standards, and filters, or lack thereof. Some things are not on their radar screen. Or it could be said that they are not on the same wavelength. So we can have difficulty communicating with anyone who views life in this world very differently from how we view it. We should be aware of this, and not be surprised when it is difficult to communicate with some folks, or when it is clear that they don't live by the same standards.

To the extent that their paradigm varies from ours is the degree to which they are living in a different world than the one we live in. They see it differently than we do, and there are parts of reality - the truth - which they simply do not see. As one example, the police chief in my town told me he had a talk with a young man who was arrested for theft, and tried to reason with him. The chief could not seem to change the young man's view that it was only stealing if you got caught. In the Christian paradigm, stealing is always wrong, even if you don't get caught - it breaks the eighth commandment.

Besides paradigm, another interesting word is paradox. It is defined as an opinion or statement contrary to commonly accepted opinion. It is also defined as a person, thing, or situation exhibiting a contradictory nature. So someone from a different paradigm would seem to be a paradox to us, and visa versa. False teachings and false teachers can be viewed as paradoxes to one who is in touch with the truth. From time to time, our paradigm comes under attack by a paradox.

The devil is a paradox, and prowls around looking for a way to deceive us. He has deceived enough of the world, that the world is there wanting to pull us into its ungodly culture. But we must be passionately and firmly devoted to our calling and to the truth revealed to us. Or if you will, we should be militantly devoted soldiers of the truth. Jesus is the personification of the truth.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. -John 14:6

The devil would like to guide us in the wrong way to falsehood and darkness, but he tries to present this in an attractive package.

And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. -2 Cor 11:14-15

This is an effective method for practicing deception.

From your Christian worldview, you observe, and to various degrees experience, good and evil. In turn, you become sure of what you love and what you hate. And if you love good and hate evil, as God does, you then long for God's plan to be completed, and to be a part of it being accomplished.

Sometimes life in this flesh in this age of the world is tough. The Bible encourages us to think of good things (Phil 4:8), but sometimes we can't help noticing and being vexed by the bad news and crazy conditions in this world gone mad. Sometimes adversities come to us directly, and we empathize with the song lyric, "If it wasn't for bad luck, I wouldn't have no luck at all!" Where is the silver lining in a rotten day? Maybe it is better to be alive to complain, than not alive.

Why Be a Christian?

It should make sense that there must be a good reason or reasons for one to maintain a Christian worldview and strive to live in harmony with God's will. What is the benefit? From where comes your motivation? Why would this be worth any amount of suffering? Just because someone said so is not a very solid reason. If you are sure God exists and the Bible is true, does this simply obligate you to try to live a Christian life, even if your heart is not in it? I fear that too many folks, and certainly too many younger folks, do not maintain a Christian worldview because no one ever impressed upon them why it is hugely important, and why one would deeply desire to pursue a Christian life.

Do you desire salvation only to save your own neck? Or only to experience a better life for yourself? Or for your own glory, wearing a crown and nice clothes? If your motivation is strictly personal, that is not the perspective that Christ taught. So really, why choose to live the Christian life? You should want to be saved for the opportunity to help save as much of humanity as possible, and then to partake in the mutual benefit of countless relationships. Above serving mankind, you should want to be saved to serve God, and bring honor to God, thanking Him and praising Him for selflessly creating mankind, and working and sacrificing to fulfill His vision of an incredible family. And no doubt that vision is greater than we can imagine, but nevertheless awesomely great - all a good heart could desire for infinity and beyond!

Prioritizing

Ever since I can remember, I have made lists of things to do. When I was in my mid 20's, and still single, I was always trying to get everything done that was on my list. If you make lists, you know that as you cross things off, you also add things, so it is virtually impossible to finish your list. But in fact, there came a day that I crossed the last item off my list. I had always thought that if I were able to accomplish this, I would be absolutely elated and would feel like celebrating. But in fact, I immediately had a terribly empty feeling, followed by waves of anxiety. I had nothing to do! I cruised around town in my car, but it was without purpose. I was miserable! Here, I recall a lyric from a Grateful Dead tune, "*I was losin' time, I had nothing to do.*" Yes, if you have nothing to do, you are losing time - burning time. Time is a very valuable thing which should not be thrown away.

Of course my empty condition passed, as things came up, and I again had a list. I never want to have that empty feeling again. I plan to die with an uncompleted list in my pocket. Looking back, the real problem with my list was that it concerned only my own welfare. Yes, I was egocentric, and probably a few other things. I have thought that if I could go back in time and have a talk with my 24 year old self, I would give that kid such a lecture, and suggest some additions to his list. Of course, he might be horrified that I turned out as I have. You see, he was living in a much different paradigm. I've lived in a number of different paradigms between birth and the present, as we all do. Usually, there is a slow transition between them. Sometimes there is a sharp change, owing to something called repentance.

The paradigm in which one lives should point to what is more or less important. In other words, it begs one to prioritize their time and activities. It makes sense that available time should be devoted to the more important things, unless one chooses to be a hypocrite. Of course it is easier to be lazy or be a hypocrite than to do what should be done, although such choices would eventually be regretted. It would be nice to have a clone to do the work, while you pursue your own leisure. Or it would be nice to have twice as much time. Perhaps not needing to sleep would be helpful. But since we all have only so much time each day, and more things we would like to do than time to do them, we must prioritize. Let me help you with that.

During eternity, there will be plenty of time to do a lot of things that may presently be of personal interest to you. So if you give up something now, don't stew. You can take it up later, if it still interests you later. How we prioritize now is an indicator of the state of our hearts.

For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. -1 Sam 16:7 (last part) (also see Jer 17:10)

So we are judged by how we feel and what we are in turn motivated to do. God does not judge us by a scorecard of how much doctrinal knowledge we have accumulated.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. -1 Cor 13:2

So love is a lot more important than accumulating doctrinal knowledge. And how did Christ explain how to prioritize? It is not the way most folks in this world lead their lives. Here is what he said.

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. -Matt 6:33

So it does little good to be a religious hobbyist, or maintain affiliation with a group that one treats only as a once per week doctrinal discussion club meeting. Instead, one must put the Kingdom of God first, and I believe that means 24/7, doing so with a heart that loves God.

You might object that I used the term 24/7. How can one be a Christian while they are sleeping? Well, I guess it could matter where and/or with whom one is sleeping. But further, for those of us who are aware of our dreams, surely we hope to behave like Christians in those dreams.

If you could go back in time, what would you change about how you used your time? I'm sure we could all make a long list. Reflecting on past decisions is called hindsight, and it often stings. In turn, we should be inspired to pray for more foresight. Reflection on the past can sometimes inform us of a few adjustments we should make right now. Reviewing the past might also help us identify areas in which we have made some progress, if we can see that we would have handled various past circumstances in better ways, if we'd had our present minds and hearts back then. We learn everything the easy way or the hard way. The only way to leverage the past is to let it remind us of its lessons, and let it inspire us to do better now. There is a saying, "God judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment." This is not universally true, but it is too often true.

Of course there are some things we have to do, or at least should do, every day, such as brushing our teeth, sleeping, eating, bathing, and so on - activities which are required by our physical condition. But we also have a spiritual condition, and so there are other things we must do every day to be spiritually healthy. We don't want to risk spiritual sickness. So we must pray every day, and a number of individuals in the Bible clearly prayed multiple times each day. I highly recommend it. Of course we know that it is not the length but the sincerity of prayer that matters.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. -James 5:16 (last part)

We should want to pray. It must be an important priority. It should not be something that we have to do. Prayer is an absolute prerequisite - our lifeline to God. Through prayer, our relationship with God grows. Prayer is an unlimited 24/7, clear channel, full bandwidth connection, with no monthly fee. You don't need to buy an I-phone to speak with God. So take advantage of the rates, and pray frequently and sincerely. This isn't to say one shouldn't also read the Bible and related materials, meditate, and do good for others each day as well. The Boy Scout slogan is a good one, "Do a good turn daily."

All that we do must be evaluated as to how it fits into the framework of our calling. What should we do and what should we choose not to do? When should we speak, and when should we hold our tongue? Our priorities reveal our heart. Or you could say that our heart determines our priorities. Of course we must all do some mundane things like brushing our teeth. And most of us must devote time to earning a living. So I am talking about the rest of the time that is available. You could call it disposable time, similar to the term disposable income. But the word disposable doesn't sound very nice, as it implies throwing away the time or extra income. Instead, it should be used effectively.

The Value of Commitment

In a proper Christian worldview or paradigm, we know that our calling is everything. Our commitment to it must be total. It is more important - more serious - than any other we might make in this life.

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." -Matt 10:37-39

God and His will come first. Our first loyalty is to God and His teachings. There is no good justification to compromise with what we know is right in order to please others. Indeed, if we are really committed to our faith, and our heart is in the right place, it will show in our decision-making. Most folks in the world wake up each day and go out to see how much treasure they can gather or store up on the earth, instead of in heaven (Matt 6:19-21). If they have extra funds, they make various types of investments. And the activity of gathering treasure is their main focus. But what about this scripture?

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? -Mark 8:36-37

It is OK to have money and some investments. But there is a more important investment to make - more important treasure to store up. This investment is a sure thing, and is worth more than what we could acquire in this world. We must be spiritually invested in the Kingdom of God, and in turn this will affect how we spend our time and also how we view the necessary evil of money. The Kingdom of God is far and away the only spectacular investment. And Jesus made this clear in the following very short parables.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." -Matt 13:44

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." -Matt 13:45-46

So imagine selling absolutely everything you have except the clothes on your back - your home, vehicles, furniture, collections, clothes, appliances, tools, and electronics - everything. What could be worth that? Well, there is something worth far more than not only everything you own, but more valuable than all the material riches of this world. And that is a place in the Kingdom of God. How sad if some do not have or do not keep this perspective. See what Jesus' parable of the sower tells us. Here is a portion of His explanation of that parable to His disciples, concerning those who lose interest in their calling.

But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. -Matt 13:20-22

From our early childhood, we see and experience good and evil. God hopes we will choose good. After the point at which one has chosen good, the rest of their life is a test regarding their commitment to having chosen good. It is a test because one continues to see and experience both good and evil. It takes some effort and God's help to take the road which leads to salvation and an opportunity to serve in the Kingdom of God. Humanly, it is easier to let down and take the road to sin. Life is like a school. We should not be slackers, but rather strive to get good grades on the tests. By the way, you may have noticed that if you fail a test in life, you often get a chance to retake it.

Leisure

At this point, it is natural to consider whether we aren't justified in spending some time for relaxation, which could take any number of forms - entertainment, hobbies, and so forth. We know that Jesus was overwhelmed from time to time, and just had to get away from the crowds. You have likely heard the proverb, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." According to Wikipedia, this saying dates back to at least the year 1659, when published with other proverbs by Welsh historian James Howell. The article stated that the meaning is that if one only works, they become both bored and boring.

Clearly, we do need to take a break now and then. And breaks help us work more effectively overall, so they are not wasted time. If you must sit a lot, it is good to stand up and stretch now and then. Walking is very helpful for one's health, and discussion or meditation during a walk can be of benefit. You may have heard these other expressions, "Work first, play second." and "Work hard and play hard." Of course how you work and how you play must be compatible with behaviors which are in harmony with the Christian paradigm. Activities that some might call frivolous, such as games, dancing, and playing sports, are not frivolous if they result in the building of good relationships with others. Going back to the mundane necessary things like brushing teeth, cooking food, or mowing the grass, we can meditate on worthwhile topics while doing these things. A friend of mine pointed out that one could pray while driving, if the traffic is not too bad. But of course do not close your eyes when praying while driving, or it could be your last prayer.

Choosing Our Activities

Keeping in mind that eternity provides plenty of time to catch up on your hobbies and other interests someday, we must evaluate what are the most important things to do with the time we have now. Certainly, we must maintain healthy relationships with our spouse, children, other family, and brethren. Of course our brethren are also family. Earning a living is a necessity for most folks. Acts of evangelism and charity are always appropriate. But because we are called now, our lives should be led a bit differently than many folks in this world. We are to assist Christ in His work of salvation. So it seems that some sacrifices are in order for us that we would not otherwise probably make. And in turn, the time saved may be devoted to study, prayer, meditation, and good works. We are to grow in grace and knowledge. Are these things on our to-do list?

Isaiah chapter 58 is worth reading in its entirety, followed by reflection. Understanding fasting to be self-denial, fasting need not simply be giving up food and drink for a while. Here is just part of that chapter.

*Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?
Then your light shall break forth like the morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your righteousness shall go before you;
The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' -Isa 58:6-9*

From this scripture, we see that in addition to fasting from eating, which frees up time, we can redirect some of our normal time usage to instead helping those in need. When is a good time for such a fast? Almost any time, and any day. It might be a short unplanned fast from what you had planned to do on a given day, when you find yourself in a conversation with someone who needs comfort and guidance. It might be a full day that you have planned to help someone in a specific way.

I have a personal formula that I use to eliminate bad habits, and which is also useful for giving up anything, even if it is not inherently bad. I must be able to make the following statement without any regret, "It is OK with me if I never again enjoy the pleasure of _____ (fill in the blank) for the rest of this life." I don't know if this will work for you, but you could try it.

As an example, many years ago, I gave up golf, and sold my clubs. If I want to play golf at some time in the Kingdom, I could probably do so. But I suspect that there will be other things then of much greater interest. Please don't misunderstand me to say that everyone should give up golf. Maybe you meditate while playing golf and it keeps you sane and physically fit. For my circumstances and personality, it was a good decision.

Voluntary Christianity

In all we choose to do, it must be with a right heart. If you live a certain way only because you have to, and not because you want to, you are living in vain. This is what 1 Corinthians chapter 13 tells us. Without charity, our activities are a waste of time as far as our personal spiritual condition. But it is still good that all the works which get done by folks wanting recognition, or done because of some sort of pressure, still provide benefit to the recipients.

But the bottom line is that true Christianity is voluntary. Christianity is about love, right hearts, and right relationships. Any other flavor is likely some level of cult, coercing folks to believe and act in particular ways. Sometimes the term "fear religion" comes up. True Christianity is "love religion." Sure, we have a deep respect for God, and in that sense have a healthy fear. But we also have a very healthy love for the Father and our Savior, and all they have planned and sacrificed in order to accomplish their unselfish vision of sharing eternity with billions of children.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. -Eph 2:8-10

We are saved by grace, not works, and yet we were created to perform good works. What is going on here? Well, if our hearts are right, we will voluntarily do good works. It is not the works, but the heart motivated to do them, by which we are saved.

*but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
-2 Pet 3:18 (first part)*

Notice that grace is listed first in this scripture. We have received God's grace, which is unmerited favor. We should grow in being graceful to others. We must partner with God to do so.

Again, Christianity is voluntary, and should never be coerced by any person or organization. And our calling is to be all the way in, not sitting on the fence, or just dipping our toe in the water. Jump on in, the water's fine! If it is worth doing, it is worth doing well and all the way, and that is called zeal. Christianity is a lot more fun with zeal, and a real drag if your heart is not in it. True Christianity is not a spectator sport!

Zeal

You could read 1 Corinthians Chapter 13 over and over, but it won't imbue you with charity. You could read the Book of Proverbs over and over, but it won't make you wise. Reading these chapters will tell you the attributes of charity and wisdom. You will be able to describe them. You can have detailed head knowledge about them. But you don't actually have charity unless you are motivated in your heart to actually help someone in need. You aren't wise unless you actually apply the principles of wisdom found in the Book of Proverbs. Emphatically, we are not saved by what we know, but by how we are motivated to act by our hearts! If we are motivated to actually do something, then we have some degree of zeal.

On July 19, 1588, the Spanish Armada of 130 ships was sighted offshore of Plymouth, England. Sir Francis Drake, famed British naval commander, and Vice Admiral of the British fleet at the time, was engaged in a game of lawn bowling. This took place outdoors, bowling on the grass - not the same as the way we bowl today. During the bowling game, a messenger interrupted the game to breathlessly announce that the Spanish Armada had been sighted off the coast. But Drake did not respond with any panic, or order his captains to their ships. Instead, his response was that he was not yet finished with his game. Sir Francis Drake continued to calmly bowl, while his captains watched. It is said that Drake stated, "I will finish my bowling game, and then we will finish off the Spanish Armada."

Later, after their victory, Sir Francis Drake was asked why he chose to keep bowling. He responded with this curious statement, "Instilling courage in men is like pouring water down a rat's hole." Rats have quite an underground network of tunnels and nests, and so it takes a lot of water to flush them out. So Drake had kept bowling to demonstrate his courage and confidence in the ability of the British fleet to defeat the Spanish as a method to raise the courage of his ship captains.

Given this story, is it the same thing regarding zeal among churchgoers? Is instilling zeal in a Christian like pouring water down a rat's hole? I know that neither I nor anyone else can give someone zeal or make them have zeal. I can only state that we all need it. We need to be all the way in. It's in or out, not sitting on the fence. It gets painful sitting on the fence for very long. You can choose to be zealous. That is what works. Keep up a sincere, candid, personal relationship with God, and receive God's help, comfort, and guidance. You are too weak to live a Christian life with only your own resources and strength. If you lack heart or faith, ask for help - help is free! A good heart is a zealous heart.

In terms of the condition of your heart, ask how you could not care about those with physical and spiritual needs. And how could you not love God? Of course you care about those in need, and love God. How much is the variable. In terms of faith, ask how you could not believe. The evidence of God and His purpose is overwhelming. It would seem much harder to not have faith. But again, there are degrees of faith. We can ask God to help us grow in these things.

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. - Mark 12:30-31

And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive. -Matt 21:22

Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" -Mark 9:23-24

Here is one method to check the condition of your heart. Ask what you would do if you really had a lot of power. What if you could snap your fingers and make anything you want to happen? Would you heal all sick people? Would you stop the practice of abortion? Would you stop crime? Would you have everyone on earth understand the truth? If your answer to these is yes, then your heart is on the right track. It happens that God has a timeline for accomplishing all of those things which we wish we could do now. But we are in an age which God has determined will be one of free choice. The next age will be notably different.

I read a book I found on sale entitled "Overachievement." Just that word alone seems to imply a lot of pressure to be productive. The conclusion of the book was that one should find something to do with their life over which they can be enthusiastic. Enthusiasm is a close synonym to zeal. I also came across a quote by Albert Einstein to the effect that one should live a life that is worthwhile.

"Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile." -Albert Einstein

So then I thought, why not combine these two concepts? The result is this statement, "One should find something worthwhile to do with their life about which they can be enthusiastic." So let me suggest that this could be fulfilled with a zealous response to God's calling in all the forms it might take. Our calling is the most worthwhile thing that a person could be blessed to receive and respond to, and the enthusiasm for it is called zeal. How could we not be zealous, if the import of our calling sinks in, and our heart and faith grow?

The Christian Life

Christians have a relationship with God through regular candid and heartfelt prayer. If you just don't feel connected to any calling, then pray! It is better than any drug or other lifestyle. I've tried other lifestyles, so let me save you some time. Don't bother with any but a life focused on harmony with God and identification with God's vision of saving mankind to be His family in His kingdom. This is God's worldview. Should we not be in harmony with God? Seek first the Kingdom of God!

Now I realize that some young folks think they are indestructible, and do not respect the advice of older folks. For example, I could suggest, "Don't step off the edge of that cliff - you could get hurt!" But they do so anyway, thinking they might luck out. Maybe their fall will be dampened by tree branches, and they'll land unhurt. Going through life without a relationship with God is the riskiest thing. Young folks must be made to realize how great an eternal life God makes possible for them, and that they must reach out to God in prayer to lead and help them through this life into everlasting life.

There are enemies without - the devil and his rebels, and also human beings who do not respect people or property. We need angelic protection from harm. In addition, because our hearts have a deceitful side, there is the enemy within when our carnal nature is at work (Jer 17:9). And yet we read that we must be transformed (Rom 12:2). Life can be a disaster without partnering with God. To deal with the enemies without and within, we must turn to the Father and Jesus, who are the friends we desperately need.

Why are we called? What are we called to do? We must be witnesses to those whom God wants to save. We must live the life that we should - suffering, and dealing with suffering as we must - to be effective and empathetic teachers and witnesses - leading folks to God.

Christianity is not an easy life, but not necessarily the hardest, as there are a lot of non-Christian lifestyles which are very tough to lead, and don't lead anywhere worthwhile. I don't think we are guaranteed happiness in this life, but rather joy, which is the expectation of future happiness. My goal in this life is to achieve the satisfaction that comes from doing what one can, and from doing the right thing. But whatever adversities we face, remember what Jesus said.

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." -John 16:33

How should one respond to their calling? One is not called simply to keep a seat warm, or discuss doctrines with others. It doesn't take much reading in the Bible to see that we are called to have compassion for those in need. We must do what good we can. Sin is not simply doing what is bad. Sin is also failing to do what is good.

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. -James 4:17

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' -Matt 25:37-40

So we are to help the poor, blind, sick, hungry, thirsty, naked, and imprisoned. And I think that can be applied to both physical and spiritual deficiencies. Do you know, or do you come in contact with anyone that is in physical or spiritual need? I would expect that you do. If so, do you give them what they need?

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. -James 2:14-17

You can apply this scripture to someone who is spiritually hungry. When you help someone in need, the work of the Kingdom of God is being done. Consider these lyrics from the bluegrass tune Falling Leaves.

*When you leave this world for a better home some day
The only thing you'll take is what you gave away.*

Conclusion

Here is a portion of the Beatitudes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God. -Matt 5:3-9*

Where are these people - the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and so forth? And here is a portion of 1 Corinthians chapter 13 - the "love chapter."

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. -1 Cor 13:4-7

Where are the people with love?

They are needed for glad and willing service to assist Christ in His mission of salvation. Could you ask for better work to do? We should want to do this work for no more reward than the opportunity to do so.

Why be a Christian now? Because it is the best paradigm for you, leading to eternal life, and because you desire the same paradigm for all others who can be reached.

I know it is not easy to travel down the road God has called us to follow. There are bumps and scrapes, and many tears. In the end, there will be no more tears, sickness, or fear of death. There will be innumerable friends who are friends forever, and activities and projects with them. We can't imagine how great it will be. And that is what is great about it - knowing it is huge and awesome beyond our imagination - to infinity and beyond!

So what is your worldview? And is it in harmony with God's worldview? I assure you that God's worldview will prevail, and all that is evil will one day be a thing of the distant past. You can be part of a wonderful and unending future. That perspective should nurture and guide your heart. And that heart will then have reason to zealously seek first the Kingdom of God.

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