



Monday Musing: Monday June 3rd, 2024.
Meaning...

Meaning? Purpose? Mission in life? Why am I here? What was, or am, I meant to do? These are a few of this past week's questions that have come from friends, those near to me and those I haven't seen in months, as well as a few in our church family. The underlying assumption, or belief, is that we are born with a purpose, a reason for being. The question is: Is this true or does the purpose and meaning of our lives evolve through our life experiences?

If we were born with a purpose, then wouldn't all decisions in life, and all our experiences have to align with that purpose? There goes free will! What if instead we are born with or into the ability to create meaning in our lives, even meaning out of a difficult time, even death? Then the secondary question is simply: What has become the meaning, or yes purpose, of my life, rather, your life or mine, because of the life journey we've had? That makes more sense to me.

I have been reading a book about finding meaning as the sixth stage of grief. The author has also asked this question about meaning and offered his explanation because of what happened in his life. He and I believe similarly.

His early life experience involved loss, death, trauma, and deep grief along with unkind ethical rules. His mother was dying and did die. Hospital rules and a formidable nurse would not allow him to see her because he was 'under-age.' He witnessed a massacre at the same time. There was fear, suffering, and deep grief in his life, from one terrifying day, that would shape his life in the years to come. And the shaping would come to give his life meaning and purpose.

People search for meaning in their lives towards the end, or at least, in the second half, and I don't mean chronologically. Because of life, people often search for meaning in their losses and in the deaths they've experienced. They look for meaning or answers to the why. Why did that happen? But as the author of the book, David Kessler, suggests: What if the meaning of your life is to heal the suffering of the younger you?

What if you are who you are through your journey, and your meaning, purpose, or destiny (without external agency), was to become who you are, because of something in your younger years? What if you are who you are, who you've become, in order to heal your younger you and help others as well? The author, Kessler, became a professional who helps people through trauma, grief, and death and he works connected to hospitals and hospices. And he says his professional journey helped heal his own life along the way.

It's my story too. My younger self was hurt deeply, in the church, and by the use of scripture, which I didn't understand. It occurred during a time of loss and death in my family, while I was searching to understand the relationship between science and faith. It was high school, already a troubling time. Today, I'm in ministry. My knowledge and experience and the gift I offer is in end-of-life services and grief. My passion is for biblical interpretation. My hope is for no one to be hurt by the bible as I was. And I continue to study. Coincidence? I don't think so. Pre-ordained? I don't believe that either.

Life happened. Trauma happened. My life unfolded then with an unknown and known search for meaning, that the older me might help the younger me resolve the trauma, doubts, and pains of years past. And consequently, I have.

I do not believe we are born with a meaning or purpose for our lives. I believe our lives evolve, unfold, and are shaped by our own learning and travels to heal the younger self and to share the gift as knowledge, skills, compassion and experience, with those with whom we encounter along the way, or with whom we are gathered together with a similar history later. Gathered together, my own journey becomes part of their upholding as I was upheld. It is the power of the Holy Spirit with and within us, that empowers us and sends us out.

Finding meaning in life through grief, may take a great part of life. But that's where you find the meaning, the purpose, the mission on which you'll be sent, and the reason for who you are *now*, not *then*, as you are *now* healing the *then* whenever that *then* came to be.

Peace and blessings on your journeys,
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Prayer

Holy God, Holy Mystery, Holy Love, you know my story. You know my pain.
Walk with me to heal the 'then,' that in the now I might offer the same.
Amen.

Scripture

I Samuel 8:4-20; 11:14-15	Samuel and the appointing of a king for Israel.
Psalms 138	Praising God with all our hearts.
2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1	Our inner self is renewed day by day.
Mark 3:20-35	From where or whom does Jesus get his power?

TR Question (theological reflection)

Through whom has God worked in your life journey? To whom were you sent to help with the knowledge gained through others who helped you at some point?