

Good Life Slide

Sisyphus is a character from Greek mythology that ticks off Zeus and is condemned for eternity- to push a heavy boulder up a hill, only to have it roll back down and then do it again.

So- hear me on this- notice- this whole Sisyphus story is about his punishment.

In fact, today- any task that is difficult, repetitive, tedious, and ultimately pointless and accomplishing absolutely nothing.— is referred to as Sisyphean.

Imagine if your boss told you that everyday you had to enter data into a spreadsheet that no one ever saw and was deleted at the end of everyday.

Or if a professor assigned you a 20 page paper- that had to be written in pencil- every week and when you turned it in you watched her throw it in the trash.

Now- imagine doing that for eternity!- It feels like Hell- because that is exactly what it is.

Until the French philosopher Albert Camus published an essay about it in 1942 entitled “The Myth of Sisyphus” in which he addresses the human desire for life to mean something.

His conclusion- There is no God. There is nothing other than the material. There is no higher meaning in anything we do.... And yet- you don’t have to despair or fool yourself with some religion...instead- think of Sisyphus. Everyday- even though Sisyphus KNEW what he was doing was pointless- he still kept pushing that rock.

So- famously Camus says in the final line of the essay.

“The struggle...is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”- Albert Camus

Camus’ main point is that success in life looks like not giving into the meaninglessness. Just get up every morning and tell yourself how important it is to write that paper that gets thrown in the trash...how important it is to crunch those numbers no one ever sees. The meaning of life is to pretend that life has meaning by convincing yourself that you are happy with your meaningless life.

“Sisyphus was Miserable: Why the Good Life Needs Transcendent Purpose”- Genesis 1, Ecclesiastes 1, Colossians 1

This is the secular problem of meaning. If there is no higher meaning to life- then everything we do is absurd...like picking up a bunch of paper clips only to immediately dump them out of the box and do it again.

So- philosophers like Albert Camus have attempted to resolve this by saying- "We'll just make up our own meaning. Everyone can decide for themselves what life means."

Which makes about as much sense as if you were drowning underwater and decided that the solution was take some of the water...to make a water ladder out of it and use it to climb out of the water.

Fundamentally- the question comes down to this...which one better represents the reality we all live in... A universe with no higher meaning- we just all make it up....or a world BURSTING with transcendent meaning- just waiting to be discovered.

The Good Life

Spiritual Connection

Deep Relationships

Transcendent Purpose

Spending the next 6 weeks on Transcendent Purpose including talking about the vision for City Church for this school year.

Today- I'm going to take you to the Old and New Testament to show you the Transcendent purpose that comes from the Bible- Then we'll finish with 3 ways that Christianity offers a better meaning to life than anything secular.

Gen 1:26-28a

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."

27 So God created man in his own image;

he created him in the image of God;

he created them male and female.

28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it."

No doubt here that meaning is coming from outside. There is a God who creates humanity to be like him. Humanity is not just another piece of his creation- rather is specifically made to be higher than the rest of creation. Humans are to benevolently rule- or as its put in the next chapter- Cultivate and Guard creation.

To Cultivate means to bring up something new- to bring life and flourishing.

One of the things to notice about the Genesis creation story- is its difference from other pagan creation stories at the time.

1- The others the earth is isn't so much intentional- as the byproduct of fight between warring gods. But in Genesis- the world comes about through the cooperation of a trinitarian God to intentionally create a world where humans can flourish.

2- Also- Humans in all the other creation myths were slaves of the gods. In the biblical story- humans are co-workers and image bearers. Meaning- they were created for to represent God through side by side, face to face cooperating relationship. w

Which is evident in "Be fruitful and Multiply-" which in its most physical sense requires FACE to FACE encounter in order to accomplish their mission.

And all of it requires connection and dependence on God.

The transcendent purpose of humanity is Cooperative Cultivation with God and each other.

Notice- This purpose folds in Spiritual Connection- and Deep Relationships. inside of their transcendent purpose.

Ok- Lets Jump to the book of Ecclesiastes.

The book of Ecclesiastes references a guy called "the Teacher." The hebrew word is Qoheleth. It means gatherer. Its likely a philosopher of some kind somebody who gets people together and teaches them about life— And in the book he's conducting a thought experiment.

He's imagining what it would be like to be Solomon- The king with all the wisdom and resources- Basically everything that might possibly substitute for meaning in life....if he had it all- could he make meaning from the material stuff.

He is essentially testing Camus' theory. Can I just keep pushing forward determining to be happy even as I believe there is no higher meaning to life.

Ecclesiastes 1:2-3

2 “Absolute futility,” says the Teacher.

“Absolute futility. Everything is futile.”

**3 What does a person gain for all his efforts
that he labors at under the sun?**

The Hebrew word that is translated as Absolute Futility is the word “Hevel” It literally means- Breath or Breeze or Vapor. -in fact some Hebrew scholars have translated this word as “Flatulence”. Meaning- not only is life a meaningless vapor- but it also stinks.

Now look at the Philosophers opening question.

What does a person gain from this life? His answer- NOTHING. Its all smoke- vapor- pointless.

Now- take a look at that last phrase in v 3- A very important phrase to the Philosopher- “Under the Sun”.

This phrase will show up over and over in this book. By it, the Philosopher is talking about if we eliminate God from the equation. If its just materialism or secularism- if all that exists is UNDER THE SUN- This is what life would be like.

And he says “Its futility” its meaningless. Its absurd!

Now- watch the way he describes it.

Ecclesiastes 1:4-7

**4 A generation goes and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.**

**5 The sun rises and the sun sets;
panting, it hurries back to the place
where it rises.**

**6 Gusting to the south,
turning to the north,
turning, turning, goes the wind,
and the wind returns in its cycles.**

**7 All the streams flow to the sea,
yet the sea is never full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.**

Its all Sisyphean. push the rock up...it just rolls back down...and the Philosopher is telling you “And Sisyphus is Miserable, bro- dont let anybody tell you he is fulfilled and happy! He’s empty and he’s thinking about next time just letting the rock roll right over him”

1:8-10

**8 All things are wearisome,
more than anyone can say.**

**The eye is not satisfied by seeing
or the ear filled with hearing.**

**9 What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done;
there is nothing new under the sun.**

**10 Can one say about anything,
“Look, this is new”?**

It has already existed in the ages before us.

- Humans never think “That’s it. I’m full. I have seen it all, said it all, heard it all.” We are always searching for something to scratch the itch.
- Notice what he says the problem- We always long to have something new- to break the constant repetitive cycle, something to say or see or hear that will be truly new and therefore significant- but there is nothing. There is no newness- just cycles upon cycles until we die.
- So stop pretending that the new job, or getting married, or having kids, or making a million dollar salary, or getting a viral video- will finally be the thing that makes our lives “impactful” and meaningful. It won’t work. Everything new just turns into the same old same old.
- One of the major differences that the biblical story brought into history was the idea that life history was a progression, not a cycle. Before the Jews- everyone believed life was just this cycle over and over, but God revealed to the Jews that it was all going somewhere- it had a purpose- everything was building to something.

Eccl 1:12-14

12 I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

**13 I applied my mind to examine and explore through
wisdom all that is done under heaven. God has given
people this miserable task to keep them occupied. 14 I
have seen all the things that are done under the sun and**

have found everything to be futile, a pursuit of the wind.

He says- “I’ve done the experiment. Everything UNDER THE SUN is futile. No novelty exists. Everybody just gets old and dies. Nothing matters. Its all Flatulence. The key here is the phrase “Under the sun”.

The Teacher here is intentionally cutting off God from this. Can we operate in the world where we disconnect from someone outside this world giving us meaning. Can I MAKE all these pursuits mean something if I CREATE the meaning- or am I dependent on a God OUTSIDE of me to give life meaning?

His answer. Well the closest we come is this. He takes us back to Genesis- to the reality of a creator that is BEYOND the sun.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 & 13-14

So remember your Creator in the days of your youth:

**Before the days of adversity come,
and the years approach when you will say,
“I have no delight in them”;**

13 When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this: fear God and keep his commands, because this is for all humanity. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.

In other words- while you are young- drill into your mind- that God is real- that he is at work, and is very present with you, or else you’ll get cynica about the cyclicall and bitter as time goes on.

He saying to the young, college students- this is you. — “If you can get this now- man- your life could be so beautiful- To know this God...to cooperate with him to make something that lasts with your life- to do things his way is actually where you will find the newness you’re looking for.”

And he summarizes the whole thing by saying, “Respect, honor, trust that God. He created humanity- he knows why we are here. And when life seems absurd- don’t forget- he is going to make everything right. There is a future newness- something we haven’t seen since Genesis 1- a return to the shalom, the peace, the harmony of the Garden. All things will be made right.” Don’t be tricked into thinking you have to numb yourself or distract yourself when evil happens- keep trusting him! He will sort it out!

Now to the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Colossian church.

Colossians 1:9-14

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may **be filled with the knowledge** of his will in all wisdom and **spiritual understanding**, 10 so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: **bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God**, 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, joyfully 12 **giving thanks to the Father**, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light. 13 He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. 14 **In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

Colossians 1:15-20

15 He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation.

**16 For everything was created by him,
in heaven and on earth,
the visible and the invisible,
whether thrones or dominions
or rulers or authorities —
all things have been created through him and for him.**

17 He is before all things,
and by him all things hold together.

18 He is also the head of the body, the church;
he is the beginning,
the firstborn from the dead,
so that he might come to have
first place in everything.

19 For God was pleased to have
all his fullness dwell in him,

20 and through him to reconcile
everything to himself,
whether things on earth or things in heaven,

**by making peace
through his blood, shed on the cross.**

TREV- thats the shalom from the garden- Harmony. Peace. Right relationship with God.
And it comes through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross.

GOSPEL

Colossians 3:1-4

**So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is,
seated at the right hand of God.**

2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Note- he says the key is not getting your mind caught up UNDER THE SUN- where there is no newness- where it will seem like life is going nowhere- where everything you do will eventually feel Sisyphean. Instead- SET YOUR MIND ABOVE the SUN. Think about your connection with Jesus. Think that you have been born again, made new in Christ and now you are set apart for newness- and to create NEWNESS.

Newness- glory- shining- brightness. But it takes intentionally setting your mind to the gospel. You are forgiven. Raised with Christ- a part of the kingdom of light- not of darkness.

SO those are 2 ways of looking at life.

The secular- there is no god- so there is no meaning unless you make it up for your self. "Imagine Sisyphus happy"

Or the Scripture

There is a personal God who created us to know him and know others in love forever- and everything we do now counts for eternity. So lets do life giving Cooperative cultivation together. Because everything done for the glory of Jesus- lasts forever.

Now- lets compare these two ways of looking at things.

Arthur Brooks- (explain when I say "Transcendent Purpose" Its meaning. Purpose here is referring to your personal purpose. Your calling

Meaning = Coherence + Purpose + Significance
(Story) (Goal/Calling) (Benefitting Others)

1) The Bible's story is more Rational than a secular story.

One of the ways you can see the constant human quest for newness is in curiosity.

In fact, kids have this natural curiosity... always asking questions.

Like the time one kid asked his dad "Does the letter 'W' start with a 'D'?"

Or

“Why does the phrase ‘I’m up for it’ and ‘I’m down for it’ mean the exact same thing?”

See- curiosity- asking WHY- can expose whether or not something actually makes rational sense.

And if i were to ask you- is a biblical worldview or a secular worldview more RATIONAL- you’d probably say- ahh the secular one- because beleiving the bible requires FAITH.

But if we put it to the CURIOSITY test- the WHY test- you find very quickly that the secular story of meaning falls apart very quickly- its not coherent.

If you create your own meaning and say “Meaning in life is to become a doctor to help people live longer.”

Why?

Because its morally good for people to live longer.

How do you know what is morally good? Who gets to decide that? What if I decide its not? Is my meaning less important than yours? Is there really any difference between a doctor that says “My meaning is life” and a murderer that says my meaning is death.

You see the problem. If you keep thinking if you keep asking Why- eventually you end where the answers get more and more difficult to find or justify. Because if their is no meaning outside of what you make up for yourself- then there is no grounding for any of that meaning...and it ultimately doesn’t matter. Its just a game to distract you from the absurdity of life.

Even if you say “love”- in a universe without God- Love is just a trick of the brain to get you to procreate and preserve the species. Its not real either.

So what do you then have to do?

Well- the suggestion from many secular humanists and philosophers is “Don’t think so much about the big picture.”

Imagine Sisyphus happy. Stop thinking about the absurdity of life and just keep your head down pushing the rock up. Don’t connect ANY of the world to a creator.
FORGET YOUR CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF YOUR YOUTH!

Suppress the truth.

Don’t ask the big questions. STOP THINKING. Isn’t that completely irrational?

The Apostle Paul on the other hand in Colossians 3 SET YOUR MIND on things above — says “THINK!” Set your mind on who Jesus is and what he has done. Locate

yourself in the story that God has written. Why is life good- because it gives glory to God and points others to the ultimate reality.

If a secular person feels meaningless- the answer is stop thinking.
If a Xian feels meaningless- its THINK MORE!

Meaning is outside of you. You don't create it. Return again to Genesis 1, Ecclesiastes 12- REMEMBER your creator. Put your mind on God setting things right and on the fact that

Don't get caught up in the futility of life think it through- EVERYTHING MATTERS.

LOVE LASTS FOREVER! NEWNESS IS COMING!

That is a far more coherent story than the secular version.

2) The Bible's significance is more Relational than secular significance.

Significance- SIGN. Showing something. Its relational. In other words- if your life is a sign- then other people have to read it to see where it points.

If you go with the secular story- your life points nowhere...just back to yourself. I AM THE ONE WHO CREATED THIS ARBITRARY MEANING FOR MY LIFE. I JUST MADE IT UP.

So we live in a world where everyone is just using everyone else in their own personal stories. We aren't really affecting one another- or pointing each other anywhere.

If we are all creating our own meaning- think how that divides us.

Imagine football team where the coach says- "Everybody pick the position you want to play"

Well- everybody is gonna pick QB or Receiver- and you won't have a Longsnapper or punter. or any Defense.

It takes a coach to recognize the individual gifting and use it for a cooperative purpose.

If we are all making up our meaning and values. We often fail to think how it affects others. We are just looking for others to celebrate our meaning when we share it with them. No ones created meaning is supposed to be "wrong" since there is no bigger story or gameplay to fit into.

So we have no say together as to what our direction as a society should be.

Who gets to define what is right and wrong for anyone to do if we are all deciding our own meaning. If one person says, I would like to starve the poor...or eliminate an entire

race of people- if we have no common given purpose- how can we together say that's wrong?

Without Transcendent meaning that is ABOVE THE SUN- we can't ever really say "That's wrong! Stop doing that!"

Can you picture that society? What are relationships like where we have no basis to say "This is the right way to treat each other"? They are horrible. And in many ways- we are living in that society now.

I'm not saying that secular people don't have morals- I'm saying that they don't have a good reason to have those morals. They have to borrow them from someone WITH Transcendent purpose.

On the other hand

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

4 Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are different activities, but the same God works all of them in each person. 7 A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good

The church is a body that works together to accomplish something. We make God's love known to the world. Everyone is given purpose and a calling inside of that body to work together to make something beautiful- notice FOR THE COMMON GOOD. In a way that produces what God says is good for everyone. Life and flourishing!

Happiness and fulfillment isn't found by chasing individual happiness- but by living into the part of the body that God has called you to be- and using that gift to serve God and others.

If you aim for individual happiness you'll never hit it. Because you were created and called to Cooperative Cultivation.

But if you live into that Transcendent meaning- deep joy comes along with it.

3) The Bible's purpose is more Resilient than a secular purpose.

If you have to locate your meaning in the material world, under the sun, it means that whatever you decide that you mean will be threatened by suffering or death. And even if you think- I'll write a book that lives on for 100s of years past my death- or leave a bunch of money to my grand kids- that won't outlast a solar flare that wipes out the earth.

So if you decide to live for family, or a political cause, or for some career achievement- it can all be thrown off course and disrupted by suffering.

If meaning is arbitrary- it is ultimately a trick. A lie to yourself to keep you distracted. But when suffering hits- Sisyphus gets honest- instead of happy. He realizes that he's just pushing a rock up a hill- and he'll never accomplish anything that matters.

But Christianity says something totally different.

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead 4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. 5 You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Through Christ- everything done in his name- for his kingdom lasts forever. You get an Indestructible purpose- A solar flare can't touch it. In fact-

In Christ- even the worst things that happen to you are transformed into newness.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

16 Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. 17 For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. 18 So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Actually in Christ- you cannot be ultimately killed at all- which means EVERYTHING you go through makes you stronger and prepares you to enjoy the Inheritance that is imperishable. Impossible to take away.

Want to know what will be revealed in the last time? like peter Said...or like Paul said when what is ETERNAL becomes what is SEEN?

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

2 I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.

3 Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's

dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.

Revelation 21:5a & 2 Cor 5:17

Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new."

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

The OLD has passed- and its nothing but ONGOING newness. Whats old? The broken, the pain, of our sin and death.

Suffering cannot take this from us. Death is now only a doorway into this.

Talk about the difference of living in a world where everything is unwinding DISINTEGRATING- coming apart...and one where everyday things are newer and newer- INTEGRITY- SHALOM PEACE- COMING BACK TOGETHER.

Chai's grave. Broken relationships. Seeing the people you love and saying "I always knew this is who you could be."

Baptism Sunday- September 27

Prayer Counselors

Lords Supper