

## See Yourself the Way God Sees You



Christopher News Notes

**O**N THE JOURNEY OF LIFE, people are often confused and unhappy because they really don't know where they're going or where life is taking them. There are twists and turns, surprises, disappointments, fatigue, and excitement. The journey of life is learning who you are, how you can become your best self, growing closer to God, and fulfilling your eternal destiny. Developing a stable sense of self is not easy. But there are guidelines for this journey, and there is a plan.

## You are chosen, loved

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life."* —John 3:16

There is a God in heaven. The atheists will ask, "How do you know?" Poet Walt Whitman gives his own answer: "A single mouse is miracle enough to convert a trillion infidels." God exists and He chose you. He loved you first, and He breathed life into you. You have entered the mysterious passage from nothingness to the beginnings of life to adulthood.

The odds against your being born were billions to one, and yet here you are. Only two people in the history of the world could have been your parents. That they lived in the same century, that they met and loved one another, whatever the circumstances, is only part of the miracle of your birth. You were carried nine months in your mother's womb, and loved as a tiny infant. No matter how precarious your origins, you survived because someone cared. God inspires all love. Because of His love, you have been chosen for an eternal destiny beyond your fondest dreams.

*"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine...you are precious in My sight, and honored, and I love you."* —Isaiah 43:1,4

## You are on a unique journey

*"As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has or ever will have, something inside that is unique to all time. It's our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression."* —Fred Rogers

You are a distinct being. You wonder who you are. God is the only one who really and completely knows who and what you are. Sometimes you feel alone, even in a crowd. You move about trying over and over again to satisfy some unspoken

need. For a time your appetite can be quieted by creature comforts, but you find in the long run that things of this world never completely satisfy the hunger from within.

Father Benedict Groeschel alludes to this human hunger in his book, *Spiritual Passages*: "A young man immersed in worldly pleasure-seeking finds himself crying in the back of the church...A hard-nosed professor of science puts aside his instruments and is led to thoughts about those things that cannot be measured and yet are most real... A prisoner in solitary confinement knows he is not alone. These are but a sampling of the immense number of people in our troubled times who experience the call of an inner force which is beyond either their rational speculations or emotional impulses."

*"Our hearts are restless and they will not rest until they rest in Thee, O Lord."* —St. Augustine

## Who Am I?

You are more than the sum of all your successes and failures. You are certainly worth more than all the things you own. Fortunes are won and lost every day. Your dignity does not depend on success according to the world's standards. Sometimes failure itself serves a noble purpose. A Carmelite nun shared her view of this spiritual insight:

"A person who assumes that his life must consist of stepping from success to success is like a fool who stands next to a building site and shakes his head because he cannot understand why people dig down deep when they set out to build a cathedral. God builds a temple out of each soul, and in my case He is just starting to excavate the foundation."

In the Gospel of Jesus Christ, wealth, self-righteousness, and worldly power are represented as potential obstacles to God's grace. It is the child-like spirit that is praised. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus says, "Learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart."

## You are more than your health

The quality of life's journey is affected dramatically by your physical condition. People tend to take good health for granted. It's not until they lose it that they realize how important it is. But even health and physical appearance can never be the ground of a person's worth. Good health is only a temporary condition. No one dies healthy. Spiritual well-being is what really matters. Some people see this truth better than others.

Bernice Santa Maria, a California housewife, is the mother of a 28-year-old son who is completely disabled. Noting the accomplishments of some disabled persons, she asks, "What about those who can't accomplish anything? Do they have something to give? Most emphatically, yes," she says.

"[They give] Patience—with their own handicap and with us, who often blunder in our well-intentioned ways; Courage—to face each day, each minute and the problems it might bring; Strength—to bear up under the derision often heaped upon them because of their infirmity; But most of all Love, the greatest gift of all—Love, uninhibited, unprejudiced, sometimes unrequited, love given freely and to all."

Speaking of her own son, she says, "What a special person he is. If only you and all the world could know him as I do."

## You are more than your role in life

Some people travel in the fast lane, trying to convince themselves that they are superior to others. Either they burn themselves out or they change. But your role in life at any given moment is not what determines your worth as a human being. Roles change continually. The parental role slips away as children reach maturity. Executives retire, surrendering their positions to younger men and women. People are forced by circumstances to change their careers. What really counts is the person you are—not the hat you wear.

Dr. A.J. Cronin studied long and hard to become a physician. It was his life's ambition, and he succeeded. But while practicing medicine in London in the 1920s, he was overcome by the wear and tear of his profession, and was ordered to take a year's rest. What seemed to be a terrible misfortune, turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Dr. Cronin discovered the urge to write and a new career began for him. He became the author of the books *The Citadel*, *The Keys of the Kingdom*, and many other best-sellers. "We cannot measure Divine Providence by the yardstick of human mentality," Dr. Cronin once said. "What we think an evil, may well be for eventual good...Disappointments and troubles are often the instruments with which He (God) fashions us for better things to come."

## You are destined for eternal life

The idea of heaven is difficult. Many are skeptical about its very existence. One such person was *Les Misérables* author Victor Hugo who, as a young man, was called a master of disbelief. As he got older, he became fascinated with the possibility of life after death and had a change of heart. In 1850, speaking to the French Assembly, he said: "I believe, I profoundly believe in a better world. It is for me much more real than this miserable fantasy that we devour and call life; it is always before my eyes; I believe with all the powers of my conviction, and after so many struggles, so many studies, and so many proofs, it is the supreme consolation of my soul!"



**"It's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."**

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How did this life-long journey bring him to such conviction? The answer is in God's grace. As we get older, we see parents and loved ones die; the fact of our own death becomes more real. We begin to look at time in terms of years remaining rather than years since birth. We begin to realize in a new way that life as we know it will come to an end.

Evelyn and James Whitehead, in "Christian Life Patterns," had this to say about death: "Humankind has struggled to discern a meaning in life that can prevail against the powers of death. In this struggle, Christians have been among the most audacious. For we claim the hope of resurrection. This hope does not void death; death always precedes resurrection. For many of us it does not lessen its difficulty or lighten its pain. But it rescues death from its absurdity."

*"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even though they die, will live." —John 11:25*

## Here and Now

While we are moving toward eternity, we are nevertheless living in the **now** of life. God does not ask us to withdraw from this world and wait for better things to come. He calls us to be His instruments of love and peace. God gave us gifts and talents to use intelligently, constructively, and lovingly. We have the opportunity, through our daily acts, to keep moving toward our destination by living in harmony with God's will. We are called to holiness. Jesus puts this idea in focus with these words from Matthew 26:34-40:

"Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, naked and you clothed Me; I was ill and you comforted Me, in prison and you visited Me...I assure you as often as you did it for one of My least brothers, you did it for Me."

*This is an edited version of the classic Christopher News Note "Marvelous, Wonderful You."*