

## QC0060 - 3 Things Everyone Needs 2 - Meaning

Last episode, we kicked off a 3-Part series called “3 things Everyone Needs. In that episode we said that the first thing every person needs is MARGIN. *(If you haven't heard that episode, I want to encourage you to go back and give it a listen.)*

In this episode, we move on to the 2nd thing everyone needs. What is it? Stay tuned.

If the first thing everyone needs is margin, the second thing everyone needs is MEANING.

I was watching a TEDX video with Adam Leipzig the other day. He was talking about attending his 25th college reunion at Yale University. He talked about being shocked at discovering that approximately 80% of the people he talked to felt their life lacked meaning. These were some of the best and brightest, and yet they felt their life lacked meaning!

Perhaps you feel the same way about your life. A life without meaning is like a ship without a rudder or a car without a steering wheel.

A sense of meaning gives our life purpose and direction. A sense of meaning helps us make decisions and measure our progress.

To quote Viktor Frankl...”Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose.”

### What is Meaning?

Simply put, meaning is the answer to the question, “Why am I here? It’s meaning that provides direction for life.

Meaning differs slightly from purpose. Meaning is the reason you’re here, while purpose is how you carry out that reason.

A rather poetic way to put it would be that meaning is the true north of the soul.

Now having a sense of meaning leaves us feeling unsettled and life feeling unbearable.

## Where Do We Look for Meaning?

Because of this, people spend a good part of their life looking for meaning. They look for it in...

- Relationships
- Wealth
- Happiness
- Self-Improvement
- Power
- Position
- Influence
- Etc.

If you want to know where you look for meaning, ask yourself the following 3 questions:

- Where do I spend my time?
- Where do I spend my money?
- Where do I spend my thoughts?

When it comes to all the things you can turn to for meaning, remember this... You can either look to things to provide meaning, or you can look to meaning to provide things.

## A Foundation for Meaning

I mentioned Viktor Frankl earlier. I've always been drawn to Frankl's thoughts on meaning.

If you're not familiar with him, Viktor Frankl was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who was imprisoned in the Nazi concentration camps. He was imprisoned just 9 months into his marriage, along with his wife, mother, father, and brother...all of whom died in the camps.

During the torture of his imprisonment, Viktor began to wonder some of the weaker prisoners managed to survive, while some of the more strong and healthy prisoners didn't.

He determined that those who felt like their life had meaning were more apt to survive the experience.

Shortly after his release he wrote the book “Man’s Search for Meaning” based upon his observations. He wrote the book in just 9 days, and it has been listed as one of the 10 most influential books in a survey by the Library of Congress.

So what did Frankl conclude about meaning? I’ll try to summarize his thoughts...though I will in no ways do them justice.

Frankl said that for your life to have meaning...

- You must have a PURPOSE to live for that’s bigger than yourself.
- You must have a PERSPECTIVE that can grasp hope in the darkness.
- You must have PEOPLE with whom you build community.

Each of these calls a person to look outside themselves and their circumstances to focus on something larger and more lasting.

And if you’re a person of faith (*and I’m thinking the Christian faith, because that’s my background*) then having a purpose that’s bigger than you - having a perspective that can grasp hope in the darkness - and having a people with whom to build community should resonate strongly.

This is the nature of meaning, and why it’s one of the 3 things everyone needs.

## **A Final Word...**

Everyone needs a sense of meaning in their life. But know this...

- That meaning may develop more slowly than you would like.
- That meaning may differ from the meaning someone else sees for you or themselves.

So seek meaning for your life, but be patient and gracious with yourself. look for clues in...

- The people around you
- Your place and circumstances
- The things you value
- Your gifts, talent, and passions
- And certainly in your faith and religious traditions.

Your life is meant to have meaning. So seek it out. Don't get to the end of your life and find out you missed a life of meaning.