Helping Others Overcome Depression

What Holds Your Life Together?

Do you agree with Benjamin Franklin's quip that nothing is certain in life except death and taxes? I have a friend who since her husband died barely eats, has let her house fall apart due to neglect, has given up on nearly all of her relationships and essentially is waiting to die. Life can feel completely broken and it may seem to many that there is not much worth to it. There are teenagers who if their GPA drops below a certain level or a boy or girl rejects them feel that life is pointless. Many in the corporate world see themselvesl as if they are hamsters on a hamster wheel working hard but going nowhere. Drugs and alcohol become a way to escape what seems to many to be the deadness of life. If you live for the weekend, then seventy percent of your life becomes meaningless. There are a huge number of senior adults who are too afraid to die but too discouraged to live. Death and taxes is the only way some people see things. What you have will eventually be taken from you and life is an absurd exercise. How do you respond to someone who sees things that way? What should you do if that is how you feel? Your Bible gives you a great answer on the way to approach life and it may be surprising, but it is just what you need. Today we will look at a mindset that can set you and those you love free. Here is our big idea. A dead life is the best life.

In the book of John is an eye-opening statement Jesus makes about life and death. **I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.** (John 12: 24-25 NIV) There are two points He makes here, and each is the flip side of the other. The first is that if a seed is to become a plant, its seed form must disintegrate so that its plant form can come into being. The seed obviously does not literally die or else there would be nothing from which the plant can develop. It is fascinating to me that atheists cling to the long disproven myth that life can spring up spontaneously from non-living material. There is absolutely no scientific data or any other sort of data to back it up. Life always comes out of something living and nonliving matter stays dead. However, living God can make dead things have life and that is precisely what He did when He created the world. In this statement by Jesus He tells us something else. If you want eternal life, you must so completely disdain life without God that it is God you want above all else.

For you to have eternal life, your life without God must die. That may sound obvious enough, but God will not live within a soul that does not want Him. I think of Lot's wife who psychologically was unwilling to leave behind Sodom and rejected the command of God not to turn back. When Jesus invited the disciples to come follow Him, the old life had to die if they were to do that. They could not be in their boats fishing on the Sea of Galilee and at the same time with Christ in Jerusalem as He taught near the Temple. Jesus put this concept another way. **"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."** (Matthew 6: 24 NIV) Your life is either managed by you without God or managed by you with God living in and through you as your Lord. It is one or the other. When a large number of people who were following Jesus left Him because of some of the things He was saying, Jesus asked the twelve if they too wanted to leave. Peter, with all the determination of one who had decided it was Jesus and no one else who would be His Lord and the source of life gave this reply. **Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."** (John 6:6 8-69 NIV)

Your old life must die if your new life is to live and it means you must hate one life in order to love the other. Jesus made an astounding claim. **"I came in order that they might have life and have it at its maximal level."** (John 10: 10b) To have this life, your old life must die. To put it another way, your new life must take root and sprout. Jesus compared the new life He offers to a fountain of water that bubbles with joy. He described it as a pasture of abundance that is green and well watered. Let me share a picture of how God's life looks in real time. I recently heard a devotional in which the person sharing it described the narrow road that God calls us to walk along as difficult. She said it is often hard. Jesus never promised your road to be easy or level and smooth. However He does say that the way you walk that road will be much more joyful and contented than those who do not have the life Christ offers. When Paul and Silas were arrested because Paul freed a girl of demon possession, they were beaten severely. **The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.** (Acts 16: 22-24 NIV)

The response of Paul and Silas is impressive. Having the life of Christ in them, they did not whine about their terrible circumstances, didn't become angry or depressed or seething with a desire to get revenge. They sang hymns of praise to God and prayed with such enthusiasm that the other prisoners were fascinated. Maximal life that Jesus offers does not have the same restrictions life without God faces. You no longer have to be bitter when others are; jealous or argumentative or worried or demanding or grumpy. You can have joy when it would seem impossible, peace when it would be considered crazy. The other day I looked at myself in the mirror and I looked grumpy. No smile on my face, nothing to indicate I had joy in my life. It was quite astounding and eye-opening. Now why was that? I realized that I was not dead to my old life without God. I had the form of faith, but it was not operating at anything approaching maximal levels. I was facing nothing like Paul and Silas; in fact I did not have a single difficulty at all if I was perfectly honest. I was letting miseries get the best of me and the only reason was that I had become enamored with my old life without God. I was in fact living as if He did not exist. How foolish! Why would I not want the contentment and joy Christ offers me? Looking at myself in the mirror was a bit like someone noticing red bumps covering his face or a scab that refuses to heal. It was a sure sign something was wrong. Perhaps you have seen the same symptoms in yourself.

The Bible tells us how it looks when we are fully alive, when God is living in and through us. It is pretty clear and easy to spot. **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** (Galatians 5: 22-23a NIV) To gain all of this, the Holy Spirit must have firm control of your inner world. In other words, your old life without God must die or be in the throes of death and your new life with the Holy Spirit in you must be blossoming, coming fully alive. The Bible gives you the proper step to take if you are to have the best life you can have and be completely aligned with God so holiness, love and peace can be developed in you. This is only though if you are born again, if you have put your hope in Jesus Christ as your Savior and the Holy Spirit lives in you. **Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.** (Galatians 5: 25 NIV) When you are in step with the Spirit, you develop the characteristics of His personality, and you begin to look like Jesus both within and in how you are with others. To be in step with the Spirit is simply to do what He says to do every time. It takes practice and conditioning to do this. You must pay attention to the Bible, pray as you go about your day and then be alert to what the Holy Spirit directs you to do and guides you how to respond to what you face. In other words, your old life without God must die so your new life with the Holy Spirit will prosper.

If you want the life of God fully alive in you and the life without God completely dead, you must simply come to Jesus. Christ put it this way. **"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.** (John 7: 37b-39a NIV) You just believe Christ will do it for you and the Holy Spirit will give you all He has of Himself to make your new life match that of Jesus. Each time you want the Holy Spirit to make your life fresh and good, build the habit of asking Him to take over your thinking and your way of life and over time, God will give you each of the qualities the Bible calls the fruit of the Spirit. With the death of your old way of life comes a new life with God in you, giving you the peace and joy and contentment you want above all else. Keep in mind the big idea. A dead life is the best life. Keep going to the Holy Spirit and you will have that new life you have always wanted.