

THE SEARCH FOR LONGEVITY

2022

An elderly man with long hair and beard sits cross-legged on a mat, staring at the horizon. A young man slowly comes up to him, and asks: "O wise one, what's the secret of longevity?" The elderly man stays still, and answers: "Keep breathing, son!"

There's certainly some truth to that! But kidding aside, how many people in this world are willing to spend time and money in search for longevity or for the legendary "Fountain of Youth"? Products promising added years to our lives, as well as facelifts and Botox injections are becoming more and more popular. Some people would even go to the extent of being cryogenically frozen for that pursuit of longevity.

In April 2021, Times Now Digital wrote an article on The Alcor Life Extension Foundation, located just outside a luxury suburb in Phoenix. This is a facility that is home to as many as 146 bodies of people who were frozen at the time of death with the speculative hope that resection may be possible in the future. Their website gives plenty of information regarding the process of death as well as the technique they use. They also add that they're making cryonics accessible to everyone. However, since the entire process costs are not cheap, we can assume that most people come from wealthy backgrounds. To each his own, obviously. But I'm asking myself... What motivates them to go to such extent? Is it the hope that a brighter future without pain or disease is awaiting them in X amount of years? Or is it because they simply have a terrible fear of death itself?

Some of you may remember the saying, everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die. Death is certainly a subject many of us avoid. A friend of mine who is presently going through chemo is one of them. I do understand her reluctance to talk about death at this time in her life, and my heart sincerely goes out to her. However, inasmuch as she follows her doctor's advice, and goes through all the treatments recommended, she ultimately has no control over her own death. Actually, no one does. Young or old, we never know when we'll take our last breath, except God Himself who is indisputably the author of both, life and death.

Having said that, how should we then live? This is a question to ask ourselves because, want it or not, the way we live will have far-reaching consequences that might affect us as well as others around us. Our choices and decisions we make in the here and now will either be positive or negative, humanly as well as spiritually speaking. Have you ever asked yourself at some point: *What's life about? Why am I here for? What's my purpose in life?* I can honestly say that I never did until God revealed Himself to me. From that moment on, I began to include Him in every area of my life. In doing so, He brought richness, purpose and meaning to it as well as hope for a blessed future in His presence.

I believe if we would understand that we were born for a higher purpose, our outlook on life would be totally different. No matter how long or brief our time on this earth is, we're called to make a difference in people's lives around us using the gifts and the talents God gave us. And it is for us to find out what our mission or calling is. It can change throughout our lifetime, but when we figure it out, and put all our energy into it, we can totally enjoy life as God intended it to be. We all can probably agree that many things in life are simply meaningless; they bring no satisfaction at all. The more we crave for them, the more restless we feel. And the more restless we feel, the more we crave for them. We're sort of caught in a vicious circle, aren't we?

You may have heard of Joni Eareckson-Tada, author, radio host, artist, and founder of Joni and Friends, who, at the age of 17, was left a quadriplegic and confined to a wheelchair following a diving accident in 1967. Well, despite her handicap, she was determined to help others in similar situations. She said: *"Each one of us is God's special work of art. Through us, He teaches and inspires, delights and encourages, informs and uplifts all those who view our lives."* Now at the age of 72, she is still dedicated to her mission,

and is surely a true testimony of living a life with a higher purpose in mind. Jesus is certainly the perfect example of it. He was put on this earth to accomplish an incredible mission, and I'm sure most of us would agree that He had a divine purpose for humanity. Actually, He even died for it... Obviously, everyone has a different mission, but it is nevertheless important.

In Psalm 90:12, the author asked God: "Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom." Why is wisdom so important? Proverbs 24:14 gives us an answer, "Know also that wisdom is like honey for you: If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off." So, how do we get it? Proverbs 9:10 says, "The fear [reverence] of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." And James 1:5 adds, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

Why am I giving you all these scriptures? Because I can honestly say that the presence of God in my life as well as the knowledge of His Word, make all the difference in the world. I can enjoy the pleasurable moments life brings on my path, but I realized a long time ago not to depend on them to give me lasting peace, true happiness, and contentment. Knowing God as my loving Father, my refuge and counselor as well as my helper and provider, enables me to trust Him in every area of my life. There is no situation I will ever face that is out of God's control. So, the best place to be is always right with Him, as He guides me on the best path for my life. It is this "Him-and-I" together factor that gives me confidence to face the day as it comes.

Having said that about life, what can we expect after death? Does anyone *not* wonder or worry about this at some point in life? The existence or non-existence of life after death is crucially important. If there's no afterlife, then let's eat, drink, and be merry! But if there's an afterlife, shouldn't we try to find out what will happen? Actually, whether or not we believe there's life after death is directly connected with whether or not we believe in God. Consequently, our beliefs have a tremendous impact on how we live life, and how we view death.

Some people totally ridicule or even hate everything that relates to God. They consider it a farce when individuals preach about Jesus on a street corner, distribute literature on Him, and ask passersby if they know where they will end up when they die. Heaven or hell? Most people totally ignore them, and walk away. Some answer they don't believe in an afterlife. Others say they don't know, never thought about it or simply don't care at all. So, they just keep going through life doing their own thing. And if it means sinning - according to God's standard - they do it without any type of guilt or remorse. However, what they don't realize is that this question is the most important, the most crucial one they'll ever be asked in their lives because, want it or not, their answer will determine their fate for all eternity. In fact, as we read the Word of God (the Bible), we find there's actually a life after death, and that there's only one way to obtain it.

Simply put, it says that if we believe in Jesus Christ, and surrender our life to Him; trusting that His death on the cross is the only way to pay for our sins and be reconciled with a holy God, we will then be forgiven, and receive the promise of eternal life in heaven with unending blessings. It is an unmerited gift from a loving and merciful God, and it is by faith alone that we receive it. On the other hand, if we reject Jesus, we will be eternally separated from God. Throughout the Word of God, we are warned about hell describing it with images of darkness, gnashing of teeth, fire, and complete separation from God. Obviously, no one likes to hear that part, but the message is loud and clear. In the end, it is up to each one of us to choose and decide what our destiny will be...