

Why Were You Born?

QUESTION: *I just celebrated my 60th birthday. I have worked hard all my life, and yet when I look back, I wonder what it was all for. Why was I born? Why was anyone born?*

ANSWER: Why were you born?

TO LIVE FOREVER? No. You can eat health foods until they come out of your ears, exercise to the point of making Arnold Schwarzenegger jealous, drink the standard 8 glasses of water a day, have more cosmetic surgery than Cher and Demi Moore combined, and 100 years from now, you will be dead.

TO BECOME RICH? No. Oh, don't get me wrong. Material wealth is nice to have, but you must share it, and you cannot take it with you. No matter how much cash you stuff into your coffin with you, it will not be coming with you.

TO BECOME FAMOUS? No. Read *People* magazine. Fame is fleeting. The adoration of the masses can leave as quickly as it comes, and can be falsely placed, based on performance vs. personality, and occasionally based on behavior that is more ignominious than renown.

TO HAVE POWER? No. Again, that does not endure. Think of Alexander the Great, Caesar and Napoleon. They conquered, or tried to conquer, the world. But today, they are but a memory. Reflect upon Shelley's contemplation of a decaying statue of Ramses II,

contrasting the arrogant words of the ancient Pharaoh (*“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings. Look on my works, ye Mighty and despair!”*) with the sorry state and empty surroundings of his statue (*“Nothing else remains, Round the decay of that colossal wreck”*).

TO LOVE AND BE LOVED? Yes. You are defined by the choices you make. Each interaction with each person on each day of your life is an opportunity for you to grow or shrink, to love or hate. You can be kind or cruel, helpful or manipulative, cooperative or controlling.

The more you learn how to love, the happier you become. You are loved by your spouse and children not for all the hours you worked or goodies you provided, but rather for those qualities that made spending time with you a joy: your sensitivity, caring, reliability and responsibility.

Those qualities are internal. They are part of you, defining who you are, your very soul. Both this life and the next will be enriched or impoverished by the depth of those qualities, rewarding you with the closeness of friends or punishing you with the loneliness of a selfish heart. The judgment of God will be to simply accept your own free-will judgment, made over a lifetime to be experienced for eternity.

CONCLUSION: So, you were born to become fully human, fully mature, and fully happy. Who you are inside will go with you from this life to the next. What you have on the outside, whether possessions or acclaim, will not. Do not despair for not having

enough of the latter, but for your sake, seize every day you have left to add to the former,
to add to who you are meant to become, a work of art.