

*Discover the True Meaning
of Life*

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

Copyright © 2002

Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	5
<i>Chapter 1</i>	7
<i>WHY ARE WE HERE?</i>	
<i>Chapter 2</i>	12
<i>LIFE DEFINED BY THE WORD OF GOD</i>	
<i>Chapter 3</i>	17
<i>OUR PLACE IN THE BODY</i>	
<i>CONCLUSION</i>	22

INTRODUCTION

So many people face terrible things today. Technology has brought the world to our living rooms. Anyone who has a television, radio, or Internet connection has immediate access to unedited events as they happen around the world. Even our vocabulary has been expanded to include words such as realtime, surround-sound. We don't just read reports about the ravages of war and terrorism. We can see and hear disaster as it unfolds.

And, when individuals are faced with terrible tragedy, they struggle to make sense of it all. "What is the purpose? What is the meaning?" they ask.

We have a great resource that provides us with structure and definition from the mind of One who is all knowing, all powerful, and everywhere present. This resource is the Word of God that stands forever. From its pages, we receive doctrine, reproof, correction, and in-

struction. As we take in the Word of God, we receive the mind of Christ. We have instant access to His timeless thoughts about every situation we face, with up-to-the-minute direction from the One who knows the beginning and the end of every matter.

This booklet describes how God uses each believer individually and specifically for the purpose of spreading the message of grace to this world. Read on and discover just how much meaning your life can have.

Chapter One
WHY ARE WE HERE?

What is the meaning of life?

This question has been asked over and over by students and professors in colleges and universities through the years. But without Jesus Christ, the question can never truly be answered. If the subject comes up, they declare that no one can prove the existence of God. "There is no empirical evidence," they say. Yet, within each one is a longing to belong to Someone bigger than himself. Many go along living in sublimation and waiting to die. Their lives are considered no more valuable than that of a mosquito in the barn or some kind of animal.

The problem is this: They fail to recognize their destiny in God's plan.

The Problem Defined

A person who is born-again has been regenerated by the Spirit of God. Eternally secure, his

salvation was sealed by the entrance of the Holy Spirit the moment he received Christ. He walks in the Spirit and has fellowship with the Father. He grows in grace and in the knowledge of Christ through the Spirit. If he fails, he can rebound instantly by the power of the Spirit through the Blood of Christ.

Beyond the constraints of time and space, the Spirit-filled Christian has a consciousness of the “eternal is”—the past is all gone, the future doesn’t exist, and now just passed by. It is a taste of the supernatural life that he will have forever. On the other hand, the natural man is always seeking fulfillment, which can never be found outside of Christ. Though he may find temporary satisfaction from day to day, his life has no eternal value unless the time is being redeemed by God’s life.

Life must have meaning. Meaning must have truth. Truth must have an origin. And, the origin of truth, regarding the meaning of life, must have a way to be expressed. The way will be revealed by God’s life. The meaning, the truth, the origin, and the way lead to an experience that brings us to the security of our destiny with God.

There is no immortality without God’s life as

the origin of all life. There is no divine good if there is no God.

Wherever there is evil, there has to be good to answer it. The question some of you are asking now is this: "Why did God create evil?" He did not create evil. Like men, angels were created with volition, which is the power to make choices. Unlike men, they lived in a perfect environment, free from the temptations that men face. Lucifer rebelled against the government of the Trinity, and one-third of the angels chose to follow him. As a result, evil entered the earth.

God created man as being "good"—that is, without sin. But when Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden after being tempted by the devil, man's volition became negative. Thus, the old sin nature was introduced and passed down by imputation to every person.

The Progression of Rebellion

"There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.

"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

"There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.

“There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men” (Proverbs 30:11-14).

There are four kinds of generational curses that express the way of rebellion. The sins of rebellion are passed down from generation to generation. The first step of the curse starts with children cursing their parents, lacking honor and respect, and refusing to submit to bona fide authority. They disrupt the order of the family, which was instituted by God.

The second generational curse is pride, which justifies rebellious behavior in the home. Young people contend that they have rights that cannot be taken from them regardless of their age. Their rebellion intensifies through excuses.

The progression continues into the third generational curse, which is arrogance in action. Under this curse, people live in a state of rebellion that has been locked into the heart. They promote a standard of living, a self-centered exploit, that declares: “No one has a right to stop me.” This has its root in the self-consciousness that entered the heart of man at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

The fourth curse goes much deeper. People

seem to lose all measure of restraint, involving crime and gross immorality. The degeneration follows a pattern of perversion, pornography, drug addiction, violence, and even murder. Generations have suffered the effects of this curse at the hands of despots such as Nero and Hitler. Hitler instigated the Holocaust of millions of Jews after a series of choices to do evil and exalt himself. He was under the control of the mystical principle of approbation lust and power lust to create his own destiny and to deify man.

Death is the ultimate result of these curses. Each curse leads to a place of destruction. Man takes a life, and he cannot give it back. However, when he gives his life to God, God gives back to him life eternal. That is the difference.

Chapter Two

LIFE DEFINED BY THE WORD OF GOD

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

An atheist in England once said, “There is one thing I have never been able to understand in my atheism: it is my longing to belong and to be loved. I seem neither to belong nor to be loved.”

Said one theologian, “The only thing in this world that matters is that I have meaning because of God. I have truth, and I have love. I have experience with God, which brings security and a destiny. Without that, I would not want to live.”

This sense of meaning is what motivated

Mother Teresa. Over her eighty years, she continually laid down her life for the weak, for the sick, for the disfigured, for the castaways. Food that she needed for herself, she gave away to others who needed it more.

What was it that gave her life meaning? The love of God and the Word of God.

The Profitability of Scripture

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible was written by God for man. It is indeed the Word of God. Men drafted it under the control of God, who breathed divine inspiration into their hearts.

We study the Word of God with all of our hearts because we understand that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. This Word is, by God’s divine authority, profitable. It draws us into a new birth and a new relationship with our Savior—the One who shed His blood, who died, who was buried, and who rose again.

The Word is profitable because it teaches us God’s forgiveness and how He cleanses and purges us from iniquity, transgression, and sin.

It is profitable because it gives us a purpose through our God toward developing the ministry of reconciliation toward one another. It is profitable because we can take the Gospel and bring new life, new hope, and new joy to the hopeless in our Jerusalems, our Judeas, and our Samarias. It is profitable because we can take it to the uttermost parts of the world to those who have no peace.

The Word is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. Doctrine shows us how to live on the highway of life. Reproof represents God's red lights on that road—"Stop here! Stop doing that!" If we ignore the "stop" signal, God comes in with a heavenly order of correction, which gets us off the detour and back on the right path.

We grow to a place where we can receive instruction in righteousness. Here, the Word of God is being hidden in the deepest part of our souls. It is where we can hear the voice of God. It is where we sense that eternal unction, that sense of destiny. We develop an identity, a self-image of walking with the Person of Jesus Christ. When this happens, a Christian is equipped and furnished with everything that pertains to divine good in a life that is based on

eternal truth.

Excellence, Reverence and Permanence

There isn't anything in the world more excellent than the Word of God. This is why I preach it and teach it.

Not only does the Word of God define pure, eternal excellence, but also it inspires reverence. There is such reverence when we enter into the presence of God, knowing that He is in us, that He is with us, and that He is for us. God speaks through us as He takes over our entire being with our consent. We become His ambassadors with the Word of reconciliation. The Word brings this kind of reverence into our lives.

“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

This verse illustrates the glorious principle of permanence, regarding the Word of God. It is irrevocable in its value; it is timeless and therefore indestructible; it is indisputable in terms of human reasoning. It is historically correct, and it reveals divine ethics in all that it teaches and in all of its results.

Relevant Truth

Finally, the Word has great relevance. If a

person is sick, the Bible has promises for healing. If healing does not come, the Word motivates the person to seek God and find Him in sickness, while the grace of God catches up to deal with our heartaches.

When guilt and insecurity try to work their way into our lives, the Word is relevant as it reveals the integrity of God's love and concern for every individual. When we need to believe that life has meaning, the Word reveals it through the understanding of the Holy Spirit. By identifying with the Cross of Christ, I find that I have an eternal purpose in God's plan.

Everything about the Word of God is so well organized, so beautifully constructed, and without a flaw. The Old Testament reveals preparation. The Gospels reveal Christ's manifestation. The book of Acts declares the Gospel's propagation. The epistles offer God's explanation. And, Revelation displays the consummation of time as we begin our life in eternity. That is the Word of God.

Chapter Three

OUR PLACE IN THE BODY

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:1-6).

The main thing Paul wanted for the Ephesian church to understand is that we are members of Christ’s Body. This is mentioned more than eighty times in the Greek text of Ephesians.

Romans chapters 1 and 2 deal with the natural man. First Corinthians 2:14 and 3:1-3 focus on the carnal man. Ephesians chapters 1 and 2,

however, refer to the spiritual man. This epistle takes us into the heavenlies, where we are seated above with Him.

People from all over traveled to Ephesus to worship the goddess Diana in a temple filled with idols and prostitutes. Idolatrous images and objects were sold at great profit all over this city. And here, in the midst of an evil and perverse society, Paul declared that the Christian's life has a meaning that is far above that of any idols.

The Authority of Grace

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

“If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:

“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

“Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

“That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his

promise in Christ by the gospel:

“Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:1-8).

Too often, we do not make enough of every word in Scripture. It is one thing that Paul identified himself at the beginning of every epistle he sent, so the people in the churches would know who was writing to them. But when, in the middle of a letter, he used the phrase “I, Paul” (as in Ephesians 3:1), Paul was emphasizing the importance of what he was about to say. He mentions his name not because of who he was as a person but because of the authority of his office.

“For this cause I, Paul....” It is as if he were saying, “I want to get one thing straight before I continue with this letter: I have a name. That name, given at my conversion, is Paul, which means ‘little.’ I am not using my name because I think highly of myself. I am indeed a little man in my own eyes. But with my new name, God also gave me an office. I am an apostle, a pastor-teacher, and an evangelist. I am under the do-

minion of God and the authority of heaven, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, honor the office, because my authority and my communication is from God for you.”

Paul went on to describe how he had received the great revelation of God’s grace, and it was given to him specifically for the Gentiles—referring to all people who were not Jewish. He loved the nation of Israel, and he would have given everything for his Jewish brethren to receive the Gospel message. But Paul’s office was to be used to draw Gentiles to God. He was a prisoner, a captive of Christ, for this cause.

By submitting to God’s call on his life, Paul recognized the true meaning of his life. As a result of his obedience, the Gospel of grace was spread throughout the Roman Empire. Paul marveled at the revelation of God’s grace, and he could only describe it as unsearchable.

The Scope of Grace

The policy of grace was established in Genesis 3:21; it was not a new revelation, withheld from the Old Testament saints. Moses knew it well. David lived by it. Yet, the Cross broke down the wall that separated people, making a way for all men to receive the gift of salvation.

Paul, who at one time sought to kill Christians and destroy the early Church, now lived to proclaim the victory of the Cross—all because the Shekinah glory of God had shown down from heaven and invaded his life (Acts 9).

Paul personalized the dispensation of grace. He said, “I was wretched. I was arrogant. I was proud. I am chief of all sinners. I cannot figure out His great grace, but because of it, I am a preacher both to the Jews and the Gentiles.”

Paul received his call as a commission and a gift from God. It motivated him to build upon the foundation of the Church (which is Christ), imparting this great grace wherever he went. The one who saw himself as less than the least and as the chief of sinners discovered the meaning and purpose of his life—“That I may know Him” (Philippians 3:10).

CONCLUSION

As members of the Body of Christ, each of us is unique and each one has a purpose. Each one of us is necessary and valuable, having various portions and gifts that complement one another. These distinctions make all the difference in every local assembly.

Finding meaning for our lives is as simple as receiving the Word of God. The Word and the Spirit will bring definition and purpose to everything that we do. We all have been given a gift of great grace. And this grace must go out, into all the world.

Dear Father, thank You that we have been sealed and filled by the Holy Spirit to share this grace. Bless us all as we develop a relationship to Your truth and love, to exhibit lives filled with meaning and purpose. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.