

Fr. Perozich comments —

The Epoch Times Morning Brief offered this selection on April 3, 2025. For non subscribers, I include it in this post.

What attracted my attention is the Confederate soldier's prayer, wherein he comes to understand that God answers prayers in the way that is best for the supplicant, and not always the way one would desire or expect the prayer to be answered.

Preparation for life requires a meaning for life. For us Catholics it is a life through, with, and in Jesus beginning on earth and shared forever in heaven.

Occasionally I supply as a priest at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Gardena, CA, whose pastor is the former director of all Catholic schools in the archdiocese of Los Angeles. Prominently displayed on the school building is a reminder of the focus of the school: "Heaven and College Bound."

St. Anthony's says under the banner "Who We Are" that, "We prepare them for high school, college, and heaven. Looking to the Eucharistic Jesus as our Lord, Brother, and role model, the school is committed to the transmission of the teachings and values of the Catholic Church and Christian culture to all students."

The Baltimore Catechism teaches in question #3 & 4:

3. Why did God make us?

God made us to show forth His goodness and to share with us His everlasting happiness in heaven.

4. What must we do to gain the happiness of heaven?

To gain the happiness of heaven we must know, love, and serve God in this world.

*Thus the article reminds us that **our purpose of life is to pray, work, and live with God, and to teach the next generation to do the same** so that people do not fall into the falsehood that power, possessions, prestige, and pleasure are the purpose of life, rather that one focus on a life with God toward heaven.*

‘What Am I Doing Here?’: Teaching Children the Path to a Life ‘Most Richly Blessed’

There are many voices promising that wealth is the path to the ‘good life.’ But, knowing your ‘why’ is the path to a meaningful life.



Parents who promote family and virtue give their kids the tools to live a meaningful life. Zoteva/Shutterstock

By Jeff Minick

In the spring of 1864, following a series of inconclusive battles between the armies of the North and the South around Richmond, Virginia, details were dispatched to bury the dead.

Before placing one unidentified Confederate soldier in his grave, a member of the burial detail went through his pockets, as was the custom, and found a sheet of paper on which was written this prayer:

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve.
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly how to obey.
I asked for health, that I might do greater things.
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy.
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men.
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I asked for—but everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

Whatever our religious beliefs, and even if we abstain from religious belief altogether, **that prayer**, which I've revisited frequently over the years, **poses all sorts of points for discussion**. During my most recent reading, the topic of young people and what we teach them was on my mind.

The 'Script'

In "[With Love and Prayers](#)," a collection of addresses delivered to students at Boston's Roxbury Latin School, headmaster F. Washington Jarvis asked this question of his audience, "What am I doing here?" Jarvis then shared this declaration from a recent summa cum laude graduate of the school: "I don't want to reach the age of sixty or even forty and have someone ask me the meaning of life and have to reply 'I have

no idea.' I see so many people just going through the motions: get into a good school so you can get into a good college so you can get a good job so you can get a better job so you can get rich and die. **I want more than knowledge; I want wisdom. I don't want to exist; I want to live.**"

Fast forward several decades, and in "The Collapse of Parenting," Dr. Leonard Sax brings up a formula for living, which Sax calls the "middle-class script," that we often offer our young: **"Work hard in school so you can get into a good college, get into a good college so you can get a good job, get a good job and you will make a good living and have a good life."**

Since World War II, this formula has served as gold-standard wisdom that many Americans impart to their children. Yet it begs a key question: Has the heavy emphasis on this equation crippled or hidden away a more heroic and deeper interpretation of how to live? Does it answer the question Jarvis asked his students: "Why am I here?"

Here's a case in point: Sax cites a 2023 Pew Research Center [survey](#) of parents in which **88 percent of these moms and dads believed it was "very" or "extremely" important for their children to be financially well-off. Just 21 percent thought that getting married was important, while only 20 percent thought it important for their offspring to have children of their own. As many as 46 percent said that getting married or having kids was of little consequence.**

In other words, many parents, either implicitly or explicitly, are teaching Sax's "middle-class script" as a gospel for living. **They're messaging that wealth and a high-paying job are the source of happiness and a sense of purpose, while shoving aside marriage and the family, two vital**

institutions that shape our humanity and are the bedrock of civilization.

As Sax then observes, **parents promoting wealth and comfort as the only virtues necessary for a good life are promoting a life devoid of profound meaning.**



Kids who can answer the question "Why am I here?" are better-equipped to succeed in life. olia danilevich/Pexels

A Different Way

Over the years, Sax has visited more than 500 schools, investigating the effects of social media and video games on the young, what they're learning in the classroom, and whom they claim as their chief influencers. The results of his investigations were disturbing and revealed **rampant depression and**

anxiety, malaise, and a sense of isolation among adolescents.

At Australia's Shore School, however, a conversation with headmaster Timothy Wright offered a different perspective. Wright asked Sax to share some of the questions that he would be asking Shore students the following day. Here's a truncated version of that conversation:

"Ok," I said. "Here's one. What's the purpose of school?"

Wright immediately answered, "Preparation for life."

I said, "OK, preparation for life. So what's the purpose of life?"

Dr. Wright again responded without hesitation. **"Human life is for three things. Meaningful work. A person to love. And a cause to embrace."**

Sax then writes, "I'm not saying that his formula is the answer we all must accept. But it is an answer. And I believe that you must have an answer when your child asks you, **'Why should I work hard in school?' You must have some answer that's bigger than 'getting admitted to Stanford' or 'making a good living.'** You must offer a bigger picture. Some concept of what it's all about."

Some years ago, I interviewed a homeschooling mom who was wife to an attorney and mother of nine. I asked her **why she was homeschooling**, and I've never forgotten her answer. Like Wright's reply, it came without pause: **"To help my children get into heaven."**

Many people won't embrace this answer either, but we should understand, as Sax wrote, that it is an answer and one without the empty material promises of the middle-class script. This woman, who was herself highly educated, prized learning, but she believed that **gaining admission to heaven trumped gaining admission to Harvard. Odds are high that she passed this life-affirming vision along to her children.**

Which brings us back to the pocket prayer of that dead soldier.

The Great Gift of a Moral Compass

Like so many people then and now, that Confederate soldier had gotten the idea that achievement, riches, and power make up the meaning of life. Not until experience stepped to the podium of that classroom did he learn that **these were vanities and that humility, wisdom, the desire to do good in the world, and gratitude are among the virtues that make us “most richly blessed.”**

This is the same lesson taught by Sax, Jarvis, that mother of nine, and so many others down through the ages. When we teach virtue to our children, we do more than just prepare them for navigating the vicissitudes and trials of life. **We also give them the foundation for answering that question, “Why am I here?”**

As Sax writes: **“Raising your child to know and care about virtue and character is not a special extra-credit assignment reserved for the superior parent. It is mandatory for all parents. ... There is no greater responsibility.”**



Jeff Minick

Author

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, “Amanda Bell” and “Dust on Their Wings,” and two works of nonfiction, “Learning as I Go” and “Movies Make the Man.” Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va.