

A Word from Mack

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Are you leading a life of quiet denial?

Do you know why you are on Earth?

On June 16, 1858, Abraham Lincoln rose to deliver his famous “House Divided” speech to the Illinois Republican Convention. The speech, which swept him into the nomination for U.S. Senator from that state, was one of his greatest. The depth of his thinking, and the practical grasp of the fundamental issues facing our nation at that time of lamentable division, bear rereading for everyone.

But it has always been the opening sentence of his speech that has arrested me. According to contemporary witness, Lincoln began slowly and almost softly, saying: “If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it.” How wonderfully revealing of his genius those words are to us.

If we were to restate that sentence in today’s tongue, we would say, “If I could figure out where I am in this life, and exactly where I am heading, then I could find the best way to get there.” And, of course, I believe that this speaks exactly to the point of the meaning of our lives. What does your life mean? What does my life mean? Why am I here? Answering those aching questions courageously and specifically can lead us to incredible fulfillment.

Dodging those stepping stones leads to an inner abyss. So it was Socrates, in the fifth century, B.C., who first dotted the period down at the end of this line of thought, “The unexamined life,” he said, “is not worth living.”

Examine our lives. Where are we? What are we aiming for? How do we get where we need to go? That is pretty heady stuff, isn’t it? But it just happens to be the very stuff of life itself.

I disagree with Thoreau when he wrote those famous lines in Walden, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” To the contrary, I believe that our defense mechanisms won’t allow that inner threat. But I do believe that the mass of men (and women) lead lives of quiet denial.

We just get busy and stay busy. That way we can slip the questions of life. And their spotlights then do not reveal the aimless direction of the slow circles we are making in the sands of time. Are our lives lining up without highest thoughts and aspirations? (I think of the old codger I saw in a New Yorker cartoon years ago. Sitting on a park bench, feeding the squirrels, he says to his comrade-in-rest, “You know, I’ve learned a lot in these last 65 years. Unfortunately, most of it has been about aluminum.”)

Can you state in one sentence why you are here on planet earth? It is a crucial and revealing test. And then having written that sentence, can you specifically detail the tasks you are undertaking daily striding forward to fulfill your life’s journey?

In other words, what are you seeking to be and to do while you are here? And how are you using your gifts, and your moments, and your influence, and your resources to accomplish that purpose?

I have always thought that the simple test of categorizing your check stubs and stacking them up year by year would be a telling way to show what means the most in our lives: "...for where your treasure is, there your heart is as well." But first, write down that one sentence that explains your examined life.

Community Renewal International is an expression of one sentence: **We are here to partner with God and one another to make our world a home where every single child is safe and loved.**

Nothing less will do. Not for my life and certainly not for yours.

God bless you all for the great company of united friendship on this high journey of renewal.