

**“A Life Worth Living” Course
Country Club Christian Church
Led by Dr. Mike Graves**

What is this course about?

The course focuses on asking ourselves two key questions: “What do I think makes for a life worth living, sometimes referred to as the good life?” and equally important, “How do I decide?”

What will be expected of me?

Prior to each session, you will receive an email that includes:

- All of the readings for that week, most of which can be done in 30 minutes or less
- A collection of quotes on the various topics to be addressed each session
- Discussion questions for the session
- Suggestions for further reading for those so inclined

In addition to the readings, you will be asked to write a personal inventory prior to the first session. The inventory should focus on what a life worth living looks like to you. No one else will see this; it’s for your own self-reflection and you can choose how much to share in the course. One way to go about this inventory is to ask yourself a series of questions in relation to various stages of your life and messages within our culture:

- What did “a life worth living” look like in my family growing up?
- What did “the good life” look like in my high school days, in college?
- What did “a life worth living” look like in my first employment?
- What does “a life worth living” look like in my current workplace?
- What does “the good life” look like to my friends?
- What does “the good life” look like on social media and in commercials?
- What will/does “a life worth living” look like in retirement?
- What is my definition of “a life worth living”?

What will these sessions and small groups look like?

Each session will begin with a plenary session of about 20-30 minutes, introducing the topic for the evening. The first session is an introduction, followed by sessions on “self and others,” “pain and pleasure,” and “work and leisure,” culminating in the final week of reflection.

After the plenary session, we will enter into a time of Q and W (Questioning and Wrestling). As the term implies, this course does not seek to provide answers but rather to wrestle with the questions. Discussion will focus on the reading for that week and how you processed it. We will

also reflect on the quotes that were distributed. Among the roughly two dozen quotes for each session, participants will choose some of their favorites and why these were selected.

Who is the course for?

The course is open to all persons, anyone seeking to enrich their lives by means of self-reflection. Although sponsored by Country Club Christian Church, the course is not religiously oriented. While some materials referenced may have a Judeo-Christian grounding, others are more generally philosophical in nature without a religious worldview per se. All perspectives will be honored.

May I have a sneak peek at the sessions?

Absolutely. Here's a brief outline and some sample quotes and questions, along with the readings we will do.

Session 1: Introduction: "Building Your Bridge"

"No one can build you the bridge on which you, and only you, must cross the river of life."
-Friedrich Nietzsche

Q and W: What makes for a life worth living? How does a person decide? Is it the same for everyone? Can it change over time? Is it attainable for all?

Prior Reading: Introduction to David Brooks, *The Second Mountain*

Session 2: Self and Others: "The Center of Your Universe"

"The relentless first-person singular, the 'I,' falls silent and we become aware that we are not the center of the universe."
-Jonathan Sacks

Q and W: Is a life worth living primarily defined by what I want for myself? What if what I want diminishes those around me? Am I obligated to care for others? What's the difference between self-care and being preoccupied with self? Where is the center of my universe?

Prior Reading: Introduction to Todd May, *A Decent Life*

Session 3: Pain and Pleasure: "Hooked on Control"

"Control is a drug, and we are all hooked, whether or not we believe in the prosperity gospel's assurance that we can master the future with our words and attitudes."
-Kate Bowler

Q and W: If happiness is one of life's pursuits, what does happiness look like? Is the good life always one of comfort? Can suffering be part of the good life? Is it possible to find fulfillment via sacrifice on behalf of others?

Prior Reading: Peter Singer, "Can We Increase Gross National Happiness?"
Preface to Kate Bowler, *Everything Happens for a Reason*

Session 4: Work and Leisure: "Characters in Search of a Plot"

"Most middle-class Americans tend to worship their work, to work at their play, and to play at their worship. As a result, their meanings and values are distorted. Their relationships disintegrate faster than they can keep them in repair and their lifestyles resemble a cast of characters in search of a plot."
-Gordon Dahl

Q and W: What is the difference between understanding myself as a human being vs. a human doing? Can my life be defined outside of my occupation? Is rest what I do after work, or work what I do when not resting? What is the difference between recreation and rest?

Prior Reading: Excerpts from Mark Slouka essay, "Quitting the Paint Factory" and Excerpt from Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler, *The Art of Happiness at Work*

Session 5: The Way Forward: "Sufficient Proof"

"That you have not yet died is not sufficient proof that you're alive."
-David Steindl-Rast

Q and W: What gives your life the most purpose these days? What is your biggest takeaway from the course? What do you plan to do with what you've learned?

Prior Reading: Excerpt from Todd May, *A Significant Life*