What is a life of significance?

By Josh Stone

I’ll admit, when I first heard about this assignment, I was worried, it seemed like too much to write, how was I ever going to get this done? I thought about this for a while and I realized, this is an opportunity to try and inform my audience on what I think is a life of significance, along with all that entails. Put to paper all my thoughts and beliefs on that question, along with this I will lay out several principles that help to put my views into perspective.

I’ll start this assignment by giving a little background on myself, my name is Josh Stone, I am a BSC freshman hoping to major in psychology, and minor in media of some sort. I introduce myself because I want to give some of the points, I’m going to address some personality, and give my thoughts an origin in the heads of the reader. The point of this paper is to give my answer to the question, what is a life of significance? This question seems deceptively easy to answer until you really think about it. In my definition, a life of significance is a life in which you live to find happiness in yourself and advise and help people do the same.

That is the short and sweet version, there is a lot of thought behind this, finding happiness within yourself is different for everyone and my method may not work for everyone, this just serves as an explanation into how I think a life of significance should contain. The important things behind finding happiness and living a life of significance to me are a safe, comfortable place to call home, good friends/spouse/family, a source of money or a purpose, like a job or school, and helping others the best you can without sacrificing your happiness. The bulk of this assignment is going into detail explaining my thought process behind these points of happiness and how to practice them in my life of significance.

First on our road to significance is starting with a good foundation of happiness. As I stated before, this starts with a warm and safe place to live. This is imperative to being clean, comfortable, and presentable in your day-to-day life. It also makes you seem more approachable to anyone you want to help along their way. This first step is probably the most important and hardest to obtain, especially today with how expensive buying and renting houses can be. But it is possible with a little work and determination. A good foundation like that is priceless though, just make it work for you, and work your way up, starting small and working your way up is the best way to go and if you’re not comfortable with what conditions you find yourself in, work to improve them, set a goal to be better and truly work towards it. These things take time.

The next step is finding good friends or a spouse. Humans are social creatures; we thrive on conversation and partnership. Even if you’re typically more introverted in social interaction, it is good to have people to talk to and to love. Without social interaction you can’t work to enrich your life, you can’t learn new skills, broaden your horizons, or experience new things. This leads to a very sad and lonely existence in my experience. As mentioned before, this can be hard for some people who are less socially inclined, but, as you will see as a theme in this paper, hard work can really get you far. Sign up for clubs, join a religious or hobby group, meet people with similar interest and then expand on it, go out of your comfort zone and explore your own personality in the process.

If I can get personal with this last point, I will. I was a very shy kid for a long time, and I still struggle with it now to a certain degree. I had friends but it was just very hard for me to talk to people, and I would usually keep to myself. This all came to a head in my last years of middle school, I was very upset, and I felt as if I had no friends who truly cared for me, I realized this wasn’t true after I reached out to my small group of friends and my parents about how I felt, they recommended that I go out and join a group, get to know some people, and build confidence in myself. I started going to a church in Argo Alabama who I had heard had a great community from a friend that also attended there. I really credit this as my turning point, I really started to explore my personality, live my life as it was meant to be lived, to say I really picked myself up is an understatement.

My third point is finding a general purpose. I will explain in more detail because that can be a loaded request, I’m not suggesting you find your true purpose in the cosmos or anything, I’m just saying find a reason to get up in the morning. For most of my audience this is school, or sports, but your purpose can be anything that keeps you busy and happy, or anything you’re doing for the betterment of yourself or others, it can be anything you want it to be, even multiple things. For me personally I love to work, I’ve been working with my current employer for jus under a year now and I’m still excited to walk through those doors, of course I have other hobbies as well, even I get tired of work. I like to cook, I go bowling, thrift shopping is a big one, I also play video games occasionally. It’s all about what makes you happy.

My fourth and final piece of advice is to be kind to others and help them the best you can without neglecting yourself and your happiness. I have always made it a point to be kind to people and treat everyone with the respect that everyone should be treated. Helping when I can and trying to when I can’t, this is a very important part of my life, I wake up to make life hopefully a little better for those around me, this makes me happy, to see the smile on someone’s face I helped, or hearing the laugh of someone I told a joke to, I get immeasurable joy from this.

This point is not just about helping people physically though, sometimes you have to be there for someone emotionally, and this is ok as long as you don’t take on something more than what you can help with. Know your limits and express to the person needing help to seek a professional in whatever they need help with and support them in seeking out that help. Sometimes, people just need someone to talk to, someone to listen to their issues so they can better deal with it. Just remember not to detriment your own mental health in the helping of others.

In this last page I will explain my reasons in telling these things and focus more on the sum of my views on a life of significance. a life of significance really is what you make it, it can be anything you want it to be, you just have to find it for yourself. This paper mostly talked about my life of significance and what I think one should contain, but that is all my opinion, in no way is any of this a strict guideline on how to live life. The purpose of me writing this is to give a good guideline or starting point to someone’s own life of significance. This is subject to change as life goes on and person to person, a life of significance has no definition or rigid set of rules, it cannot be defined with words, only really with actions.

My method isn’t perfect, there are a lot of questions these rules leave unanswered, too many to list and answer, but it is the gist of what I figure to be the makings of a significant life. I will conclude with this paragraph, I cannot answer the question posed to me in this assignment, I don’t think I ever will be able to, but I can express my opinion on what I think it could be, and I believe I have done that well. Life is terribly short, and it is important to enjoy it to its upmost degree, treat people with kindness, do what makes you happy, find people that make you happy, eat what makes you happy, and seek to learn and grow as knowledgeable as you can from as many different people and places as possible.

In conclusion, a life of significance is one where you create your own happiness in service to yourself and others. No matter how you choose to spend your time, no matter what you strive to be in life, you create your own significance. self-fulfillment is key and working towards it and helping others on their journey is, in my opinion, is the way to do it. This assignment was an amazing experience to get my views out to a broader audience and really get a chance to really explore my own beliefs and put them into word. I appreciate the time of the reader and I hope you find your own life of significance and live and influential life.