Time is of the essence

By Chaplain Michael Chaney

What is the meaning of life? Does your life have purpose? What is true happiness? Does the way we live our lives affect our path to realizing such happiness? And, how do we—or can we—achieve the good life?

One of the best answers to these questions came about when Robin Williams implored his students in the movie "Dead Poets' Society" to live their lives with the knowledge of the wind at their backs—to take the road less traveled—as their lives could be unique while changing the world to be a better place: "Carpe diem. Seize the day, boys. Make your lives extraordinary." Yet the question remains deeply personal to all of us—how do you actually do it? That is, in the time we are given, reach your potential in maximizing your talents to make the world a better place for the next Sailor, your son or daughter, or even your grandchildren.

It was Aristotle who is credited with philosophical treatises on ethics and "the good life," when he found that "Happiness does not consist of pastimes and amusements but in virtuous activities." Other scholars studied how folks were to be "called" into their vocation. Similar yet distinctive understandings by other great learners like psychologist Abraham Maslow and his ideas on self-actualization indicate today that a key component of an individual's happiness with life depends upon what they do with that life.

As a chaplain, my colleagues are very familiar with being called into our vocational choice in ministry. But the reality is that the definition of successfully finding your path in life—your true calling—does not mean that you must also be a chaplain or minister. Rather, you can find joy in who you are and what you do if you take some time to assess what you have to offer a world that needs and wants your application of self. God has created you for this very moment here in Japan. Your challenge, if you choose to accept it, is to find out why and for what purpose you will live your life.

Often when I have couples come into my office to discuss issues surrounding their present situation in their married lives, I have to first ask leading questions that will help me to see who the people are, or were, individually. It is in these moments of re-introduction to one another that often folks are provoked to re-think who they are, what it is that they do, and why they do it. The not-so-subtle reality is that one does not have to be in a married crisis to lose sight of what is important in their lives. Or, what causes them to lose hope if only for a moment to think that they do not matter. Single folks struggle just as military or civilian mindsets can be blocked by the stressors that cause us to breathe more rapidly and in more shallow intonations. Before we know it, instead of the deep, stress-free exhales that can re-center us, we are breathing faster and no longer so deeply. The faster we go, the quicker we seem to lose sight of the mission at hand: the good life is realizing your gifts and organizing your life in such a way that you can draw on them in your work, family and relationships.

Of course the courage to live a life that requires such accountability is your challenge: if, again, you choose to accept it. Yet the freedom that comes with such self awareness is a deep resource that can bear fruit for a lifetime. Some of you may, one day, decide that your gifts are in teaching. Others may see your skills in management. It is even possible that you feel led to see the world as it exists around you, which causes you to live a life answering a wanderlust felt from heaven. For many there can be no greater joy when we share our life with those who know nothing of Christian discipleship.

Tapping into what God has within you can certainly open one's life to greater meaning, satisfaction and personal growth. For instance, while we work hard to achieve our Associate's degree, is it possible that God is calling you today to stay in school just a little longer to get a bachelor's or master's degree? Is it possible that while you may feel frustrated at work or at home, that if you can find within yourself just a tad bit more patience that your life could possibly turn around for the better? Or, maybe in your isolation, if you will simply share your life with others you will find a new joy in friendships that would never have been open if you had kept your heart closed to the possibilities?

The test in front of you is to know what it is about your life that makes your light special. Yet, just like any test that we take, there are rules to follow. Maybe the most important guideline upon us is that our time together is short, even though many will try, unsuccessfully and with great expenditures of energy, to cheat and recover what we so often take for granted. At most we have a limited amount of days here. Consequently, in the time that we each have left, the challenge today is not to waste it. Love your family more. Love your friends more deeply. Love yourself to appreciate what you can do when you finally realize that the only thing that is holding you back today is the face that stares you back from the mirror.

If we close our eyes and center ourselves for just a moment in a still and quiet place, I believe that we can hear within ourselves what it is that God is calling us to become. Seize the day, take the road less traveled and believe that your gifts are extraordinary. A world beyond Japan awaits your answer to this invitation. What are you going to do?

Heads Up Yokosuka

Community Announcements

CFAY DoDEA Schools Open House Dates – The following are the dates for CFAY DoDEA Schools open house events:

- Kinnick High School: 4:30-6:30 p.m., Sept. 15
- Yokosuka Middle School: 4-6 p.m., Sept. 16
- Byrd Elementary School: 5:30-6:30 p.m., Sept. 17
- The Sullivans School: 2:30-3:30 p.m., Sept. 22
- Ikego Elementary School: 2-3 p.m., Sept. 23

Contact School Liaison Officer (SLO) Ruth Russell at 243-1208 or e-mail to ruth.russell@fe.navy.mil for more information.

Navy College Office Tuition Assistance (TA) – Navy College Officer TA/Electronic TA (ETA) Briefs are conducted on the first and third Thursday of each month at 11 a.m. For TA processing, submitted ETA/TA forms will be available for pick up the next day after 1 p.m. Command TA/ETA Briefs are provided for groups of eight or more at your location. Contact the Navy College Office located in room 347 on the third floor of the Fleet Recreation Center at 243-8131 or by e-mail to navycollege_yokosuka@fe.navy.mil for more information.

The Yard of the Month Program – Winners are selected the first week of each month through September. You must reside on base; in a single detached unit or town house for at least 60 days from the selection week to be eligible to participate in the program. Selection criteria are:

- Lawn should be neatly mowed at a height of approximately 2-4 inches, free of weeds and debris and edged along all boarders, fences, walks and parking areas.
- Grass should be consistently green throughout the lawn area.
- Flower beds should be cultivated and free of grass and weeds.
- Shrubs and flowers will be neatly pruned. Dead leaves branches, and dead or unhealthy vegetation should be removed.
- Candidates cannot have received a yard violation notice within the previous three months.

For more information contact the resident liaison at 243-9067.

CFAY CSO Cmdr. Tim Dewitt congratulates Florida Sameulson, wife of Lt. Cmdr. Eric Samuelson as the July 1st place winner of the CFAY Housing Welcome Center Yard of the Month Program. The program, sponsored by MWR, recognizes the efforts by residents in the beautification of their yards and provides an incentive to maintain high standards throughout the community. Photo by Yuji Kawabe