

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: I'm worried about my husband. Recently, he seems so dissatisfied with life in general; he's moody and irritable. I'm afraid he'll grow dissatisfied with the kids and me. Is this some kind of mid-life crisis?

ANSWER: It's very common for men to reach a point in their lives (by the grace of God) where they dare to look at the deepness of existence and the anguish of their souls. Often, what they see shakes them in such a way as to change them forever; they either become depressed, fearful, and unsatisfied, or they find joy, courage, and satisfaction. Such men teeter between despair and hope, suicide and life.

We often stereotype middle-aged men: they change jobs, buy a sports car, dye their hair, start to work out, have an affair, etc. If this stereotype weren't often true, it would indeed be laughable, but there's nothing humorous for the wife and children of such a man.

Many men don't often think existentially (about meaning and purpose) until they experience at least one of the following events: they grow old, they have a near death experience, they survive a great evil, or the world they have created falls apart.

It is truly evidence of the great goodness of God that he uses the struggles, heartache, fears, and pains of life to awaken the angst of a man's soul. It is within the "dark night of the soul" that there is **opportunity to be drawn into deep relationship with God** (the ultimate reason for existence)! The thoughts with which a man struggles are hard and demanding, but can also be productive and transformational. You can help him!

1. Encourage him to **consult with his physician**. There are medications that help with depression, anxiety, and compulsivity. His condition could be part physiological and/or neurological. The physical overlaps the spiritual and the emotional.

2. However, **don't just settle for attenuating symptoms**. Challenge him to seize this time as an opportunity to explore the deep issues of life. Find an experienced Christian, existential psychotherapist (one

who deals with questions of deep meaning and how they overflow into the rest of life) and spend time in counseling.

3. Pray together daily, search the Scriptures, and help your husband find ways to serve and give in the name of Christ. Remember, a man **finds his greatest fulfillment in accomplishment**. Help him discover “eternal” accomplishment and satisfaction by doing the work of God!

4. Encourage him to **establish a mentoring relationship** with a godly man (or group of men) who will exhort, challenge, and hold him accountable. There are some feelings, thoughts, and battles your husband **should not heap upon you**. Doing so would violate your heart.

5. **Fulfill your role as the “biblical helper”** by offering your heart, your intuition, and your support in remaining at his side. Men desire an ally. Let your relationship with Christ allow you to handle the tough questions and the hard times. Find a Christian support system for you too!

Viktor Frankl, the Jewish psychiatrist imprisoned in a concentration camp during WWII, once said: “The meaning of our existence is not invented by ourselves, **but rather detected**.” Sadly, many men live in the shallowness of career and pleasure. In many ways, they remain “little boys” until they are jolted by the realities of life in a fallen world. If not overwhelmed, they are catapulted into maturity.

Let us pray your husband will “detect” the great purposes of God, so that he will find true satisfaction, accomplishment, and life. God can do a mighty work here if your husband will not flee.

Jack Lipski, M.A.
Christian Counselor

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