



What's it all about?

“Dr. Papaderos, what is the meaning of life?” I asked the aging German professor of Greek culture and history.

The usual laughter followed, and people stirred to go.

Papaderos held up his hand, stilled the room, and looked at me for a long time, asking with his eyes if I was serious and seeing from my eyes that I was.

“I will answer your question.” Taking his wallet out of his hip pocket, he fished into a leather billfold and brought out a very small round mirror, about the size of a quarter. And what he said went like this:

“When I was a small child, during the war, we were very poor and we lived in a remote village. One day, on the road, I found the broken pieces of a mirror. A German motorcycle had been wrecked in that place.

“I tried to find all the pieces and put them together, but it was not possible, so I kept only the largest piece. This one. And by scratching it on a stone I made it round. And I began to play with it as a toy and became fascinated by the fact that I could reflect light into dark places where the sun would never shine—in deep holes and crevices and dark closets. It became a game for me to get light into the most inaccessible places I could find.

“I kept the little mirror, and as I went about my growing up, I would take it out in idle moments and continue the challenge of the game. As I became a man, I grew to understand that this was not just a child's game but a metaphor for what I might do with my life. I came to understand that I am not the light or the source of light. But light—truth, understanding, knowledge—is there, and it will only shine in many dark places if I reflect it.

“I am a fragment of a mirror whose design and shape I do not know. Nevertheless, with what I have I can reflect light into the dark places of this world—into the black places in the hearts of men—and change some things in some people. Perhaps others may see and do likewise. This is what I am about. This is the meaning of *my* life.”

And then he took his small mirror and, holding it carefully, caught the bright rays of daylight streaming through the window and reflected them onto my face and onto my hands folded on the desk.

Much of what I experienced in the way of information about Greek culture and history that summer is gone from memory. But in the wallet of my mind I still carry a small round mirror.

—*Ted Cashion*

*Do all the good you can.
By all the means you can.
In all the ways you can.
In all the places you can.
At all the times you can.
As long as you ever can.*

—*John Wesley (1703–1791)*

I try to give to the poor people for love what the rich could get for money. No, I wouldn't touch a leper for a thousand pounds; yet I willingly cure him for the love of God.

—*Mother Teresa (1910–1997)*

Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.

—*Albert Einstein (1879–1955)*

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

—*Jesus (Luke 9:24–25 NIV)*