

Mickey Mouse Explains The Meaning of Life

A Short Story

We each have specific days which are etched in our memory—moments we'll never forget. Maybe for you it was the day of your graduation, your wedding, the birth of your children, or the passing of someone close to you. Moments like these never fade. They are as real today as the day they happened.

For me, one particular moment changed my life forever. You'll think I'm exaggerating when I tell you what occurred, but I swear every word is true. It really happened and since that day I've never been the same.

I want to tell you about the day Mickey Mouse explained the meaning of life to me.

Many autumns ago, I walked down Main Street U.S.A. at Magic Kingdom. As I slowly strolled from beneath the shadows of the train station into the bright Florida sunshine, the smell of freshly popped popcorn grabbed my attention.

It was around 10 a.m. and too early for popcorn, so I willed myself away from the nearby cart. I maneuvered through the crowds into the town square. The air filled with the four-part harmonies of a live barbershop quartet who entertained the crowd quickly gathering around them. Enhancing the music were the squeals of children, who led (more like dragged) their moms and dads by the hand toward the centerpiece of Magic Kingdom: Cinderella Castle. The crowd flittered toward the castle like fallen leaves being gently carried on a breeze down a neighborhood street.

I took my time as I meandered along the sidewalk, casually looking in the windows of the specialty stores along Main Street. Kids and adults emerged from the Chapeau Hat Shop with traditional Mickey ears— freshly embroidered with their names. The Confectionary sold sweets of every size, shape, and savor. I peered into a window where a Disney Cast Member decorated freshly chocolate-dipped strawberries on the other side of the glass. She smiled and waved as she placed a tray of those beauties right in front of me.

Next, came Main Street Cinema, which wasn't a movie theatre anymore. The whimsical storefront offered an array of Disney artwork. As I passed underneath the marquee, I glanced toward the window. In an instant, my casual stroll came to a screeching halt. I don't know if I can adequately capture with words how I felt the moment I saw it.

All I know is it took my breath away. I couldn't stop staring at it. There was something about it which wouldn't let me go.

It was a painting, a painting of Mickey Mouse.

In my lifetime, especially during my recent years as pastor of Cast Member Church, I've seen hundreds—even thousands—of paintings, drawings, and sculptures of Mickey Mouse. But something deep and meaningful made this painting different. To this day, I have never felt so moved by a picture of Mickey or any picture for that matter.

In this particular painting, Mickey sat on a stool. He had a big canvas placed upon an art easel in front of him and a paintbrush in his hand. Mickey stared into a mirror—studying his own features the way an artist would when attempting to capture and create a self-portrait. Only this was not a self-portrait. What Mickey saw in the mirror and what came from Mickey's brush were two different things.

The image on the canvas was not the likeness of Mickey Mouse, but rather the face of Walt Disney—Mickey's creator.

When Mickey Mouse peered into the mirror, he beheld the face of his creator.

Time stood still as I stared at the painting. People passed behind me and in front of me, totally oblivious to the masterpiece in their midst. I couldn't believe how people didn't notice what I saw in this beautiful work of art. Something amazing happened to me there in front of the painting; God spoke these words into my heart:

"This is the meaning of life."

According to who I know for certain was God, this painting revealed an answer to a question I didn't know I had been asking.



I finally tore myself away from the painting. I joined my friends for a day filled with riding attractions and seeing shows throughout Magic Kingdom. Regardless of what we did, that painting continued to linger in my mind.

After the nighttime fireworks, we walked back down Main Street toward the exit. I went to see the painting one more time. While I took what I thought was my final look, a Cast Member at the entrance near the window informed me I could purchase a print of that very painting. I didn't even ask her how much it was. I left Magic Kingdom that night with my message from God, rolled up and sealed in a round canister.

Within a week, I had it framed. To this day, it has hung in either my home or my office—front and center for all to see.

Many years have passed. I now live less than a mile from the location where I first saw the original. I treasure the significance of this painting more with each passing day. What could be so powerful about a painting—especially one of Mickey Mouse—to cause a person to discover with indescribable clarity, the meaning of life?

The answer is found in the mirror; the mirror Mickey Mouse looked into.

This is an excerpt from A Guide to a Life Beyond Imagination by Steven L. Barr, available on Amazon. (c) 2019

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