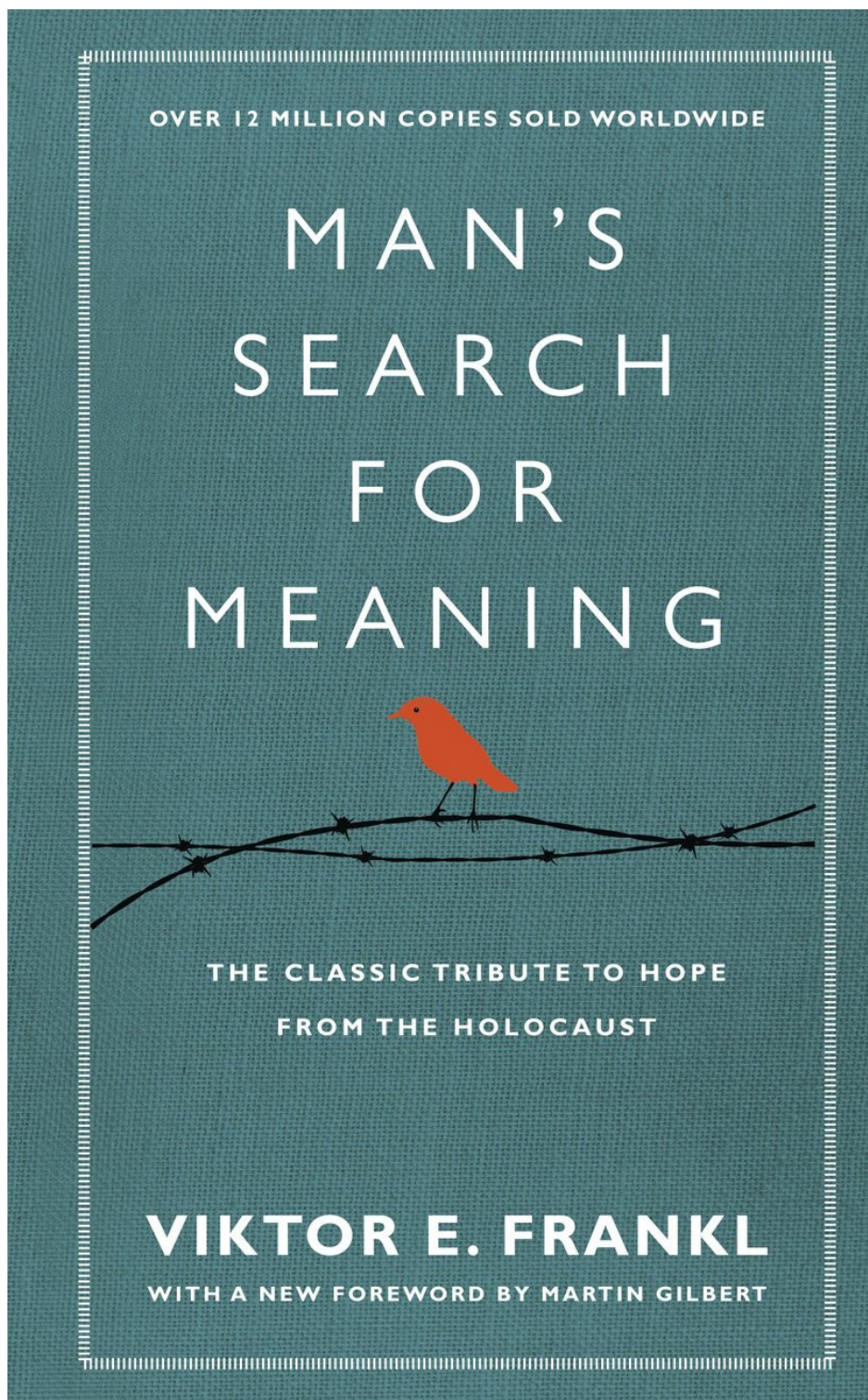


# Victor Frankl's "Man's Search for Meaning"

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Why am I here? What should I do now? These questions come to our minds from time to time, regardless of what stage of life we are in. We play many roles every day. We may be students, looking forward to improving our studies and securing a good job after graduation. We may be children, trying to live in harmony with our parents. We may also be team members, working jointly to finish a project on time to satisfy our boss or client. Sometimes, we question the meaning behind all that are asked of us. Is what I'm doing the right thing? What's my destiny?

In the book "Man's Search for Meaning", Nazi concentration camp survivor and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl narrates how he transcended his sufferings in the camps and explored

the meaning of human experiences. The book focuses on the following themes:-

1. What is true freedom?
2. How can we make sense of all the unjust happenings around?
3. How can we find lasting meaning in what we can/will do?

Contrary to what we usually think, Frankl states that freedom is not about doing whatever you like, but being free to choose how you respond to your current situations. To those familiar with Stoic philosophy, Buddhism or the Serenity Prayer, this idea strikes a similar chord. When we react automatically to situations, whether they bring us joy or despair, we become enslaved to the happenings and our emotions. Frankl instead advises us to own our emotions and carry the utmost responsibility of choosing our response. It is often easier to blame external circumstances or parties for our failures and sufferings, making ourselves helpless. Adopting Frankl's thinking, we will, however, see that we do have control. We cannot dictate what will happen in the external world, but we can always adopt

the right attitude to handle the situation.

Frankl spends most of this book exploring life's meaning. He states that we can discover it by: (1) creating work; (2) experiencing something or encountering someone; and (3) the attitude we take toward unavoidable sufferings. He encourages us to answer life's questions with our solid actions. Once we find our lives' meaning, he argues, "those who have a 'why' to live, can bear with almost any 'how'."

In our current era of uncertainty and chaos, Frankl's lessons can guide us to reflect on our lives' unique purposes, and rekindle our enthusiasm for experiencing and contributing to this world.