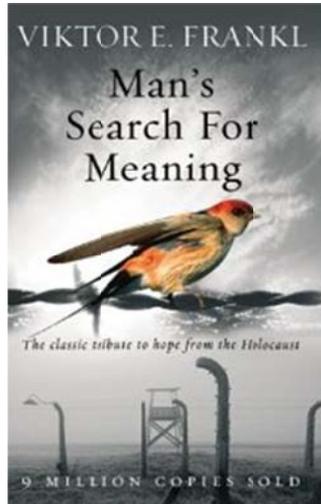


book review by john varney

man's search for meaning

victor frankl – random house



A compelling read about lessons from the extremes of behaviour of which all people are capable. Frankl tells us something of his experiences in Nazi concentration camps. However that is merely to illustrate the insights he gained as a psychiatrist in the most extreme circumstances. Primary among these is that life's meaning is what we choose it to be: it is found in every moment of living; life never ceases to have meaning, even in suffering and death.

"In a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way – an honorable way – in such a position man can, through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved, achieve fulfillment."

He concludes that our psychological reactions are not only the result of our conditions of life, but also the freedom of choice we always have, even in the most trying of circumstances. It is the sense that life has meaning or purpose that enables some people to survive extreme conditions – those without it rapidly perish.

With this idea in mind, we could say that a role of leadership is to connect people to a sense of purpose – to bring meaning to life. What better way to enable people to become self-motivating? There are some beautifully written passages.

John Varney helps organisations with strategy innovation and cultural change. As facilitator and coach, his challenge, empathy and support lift the aspirations of individuals and teams.