

Recitation C

Life's Essential Questions

In a Harvard University graduation speech, speaker James Ryan talked about “life’s essential questions.” They included “Wait, what?”, “How can I help?”, and “What truly matters?” By asking these simple but important questions, we can make better choices in our lives. We can help others too, Ryan believes. But how can these questions actually help us in our everyday lives? Here is one example:

Imagine it’s the summer after graduation, and you’re doing an interesting internship at a company you like. The only problem is the internship is part-time and unpaid. But after a month of working hard, your boss offers you a full-time job. You are excited about the opportunity until your boss tells you the starting pay. You stop and think, “Wait, what?” The pay is very low. You really want the job, but you wonder, “How will I support myself? It won’t be easy.”

Your boss gives you a few days to think over the offer, so you talk to a friend about it. You tell your friend you’re not sure whether you should accept the low pay or quit and apply for other jobs. You’re even considering taking some time off to do something else, like travel. Your friend listens and asks, “How can I help?”

You ask your friend for some advice, and she suggests that first, you ask your boss for higher pay. However, if the company can’t pay more, she says that you should ask yourself, “What truly matters? What is most important right now: the money or the opportunity to work for this company? How will your choice help you in the future?” You thank your friend and smile because you know that with the help of “life’s essential questions,” you’ll make the right decision.

(293 words)