

IS YOUR LIFE FULFILLING?

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Are you successful? Perhaps you have a college education, maybe even an advanced or professional degree; a great job, a beautiful and healthy family, a bright future.
 - A. But despite these outward trappings of success you still experience a nagging feeling there should be more to life.
 - B. Many discerning and thoughtful people experience such feelings at some point in their life.
2. I don't mean to suggest such feelings of dissatisfaction are wrong.
 - A. Nor are they merely a symptom of life in the twenty-first century.
 - B. Nearly 3,000 years ago a very wise man, King Solomon, reflected at the end of a long life spent pursuing happiness and peace of mind.
 - (1) The wise man had the resources and knowledge to conduct his search by engaging in a wide variety of earthly pursuits.
 - (2) From a worldly, human perspective, he was eminently successful.
 - (3) He obtained great wealth and wisdom, he experienced all the pleasures life had to offer, and he obtained great power and position.
 - (4) But as the end of his life drew near he felt a great emptiness and wrote these words:
Eccl. 1:1-11.
3. Can you sympathize with Solomon? Have you ever entertained similar thoughts? If you have I sincerely urge you to listen to me closely and carefully.
4. In the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon wrote many more words describing the empty feelings all experience from time to time. His words of wisdom on these matters are most worthy of study.
 - A. However, something else is of much greater importance.
 - B. ****** Even though Solomon found most things in life "under the sun" didn't bring lasting satisfaction, he did come to find the ultimate and true meaning of life: *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."* (Eccl. 12:13-14)
5. **3** I submit to you that to find true peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment in life we need to make sure we establish and positively maintain three critical relationships:
 - A. A relationship with God,
 - B. A relationship with ourselves, and
 - C. A relationship with our fellow man.

II. DISCUSSION:

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1. **4** Relationship with God:
 - A. Our secular and scientific world does all they can to erase the idea of God from our minds.
 - (1) The New Atheists, such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris; are critics of all religions, but most especially of Christianity.

- (2) Some of their criticisms are valid, including what they falsely identify as “Christianity.”
- (3) But, I find their writings wanting, especially as it concerns the existence of God, the origin of life, and how man might satisfy his desires for a fulfilling life.
- B. First, they cannot provide satisfying answers explaining the origin and existence of the Universe or the origin of life.
 - (1) Like most materialists, they subscribe to the “Big Bang” theory to explain the existence of the Universe and the theory of evolution to explain man’s existence.
 - (2) They are dismissive and derisive of anyone suggesting an alternative, i.e., that a supernatural force (God) created the Universe and all the life inhabiting it, including man.
- C. The fact is, some scientists, many of which do not believe in God, recognize there are many very serious shortcomings to both the “Big Bang” theory and the theory of evolution.
 - (1) To derisively accuse those who believe in a creator God as dimwits on the same intellectual level as those believing in a flat earth or the Loch Ness monster is not helpful to an intelligent and fruitful discussion of these important issues.
 - (2) There are alternative explanations to the materialistic origin of the Universe and life that appeal to sound scientific principles.
- D. **5** The heart of our argument for God’s existence is the overwhelming evidence of design in our vastly complex material Universe and every living organism.
 - (1) It is ludicrous to explain our unimaginably huge and complex Universe popping into existence from nothing.
 - (2) Such violates the well-accepted *Law of Causality*; and, it is even more fantastic to explain the origin of life as non-living, unintelligent chemicals randomly interacting to produce the abundance and complexity of life seen on our planet.
 - (3) Such theories violate several other key scientific principles which are supported by a mountain of experimental evidence.
 - (4) Every time a materialist is faced with a hurdle in explaining the Universe, the origin of life, or the complexity of life; they pull out the “magic wand” of “billions and billions of years,” and “poof” the Universe easily pops into existence from nothing and lifeless, unintelligent molecules magically gain the ability to organize themselves into complex living creatures.
- E. We believe an infinite being, of incomprehensible power and knowledge, created the Universe and the complex life we see all around us.
 - (1) The design manifestly visible throughout the Universe is undeniable evidence there is a Grand Designer.
 - (2) God is the cause of our fabulous Universe not random, unintelligent processes.
 - (3) God has left obvious evidence He exists and to deny His existence is a monumental mistake on our part.
 - (4) The Bible says the created Universe provides irrefutable evidence a being exists with “*eternal power and deity*” (Rom. 1:20).
 - (5) Those who fail to recognize the great truths this evidence provides are “*without excuse.*”
 - (6) The Universe, the creatures in it, and the human race are not a grand cosmic accident, but the purposeful creation of an infinitely powerful, incredibly intelligent, and marvelously wise eternal being.

- F. Thus, our first step on the road to true peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment is recognizing there is a God, the one true God who created all things including man.
- G. **6** But, there is more, much more!
- (1) This same God who has provided us with undeniable evidence of His existence (i.e., “*He is*”), also requires us to believe “*that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.*” (Heb. 11:6)
 - (2) Why? Because “*God created man in His own image*” (Gen. 1:27).
 - (3) Think of that! Of all the awesome things God created in this vast, unimaginably huge and complex Universe, the only thing He created in His likeness is man!
 - (4) Man is at the pinnacle of God’s creation! We are created reflecting His glory, power, intelligence and wisdom!
- H. God also created man to reflect His morality and goodness.
- (1) However, the wonderful bond and unique closeness between God and man was shattered by sin (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23).
 - (2) Man is alienated from God by sin. And the Bible, God’s revelation of His will for man, records the centuries-old story of God reconciling man to Himself.
- I. Thus, our next step toward finding peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment is to learn God’s plan for alleviating the alienation caused by our sin.
- (1) God reveals this grand scheme of redemption in His book...The Bible.
 - (2) From the beginning of the book of *Genesis* to the end of the book of *Revelation* the golden thread of God’s scheme of redemption is evident.
 - (3) But the New Atheists, and many others, denigrate and disparage the Bible.
 - (4) They do so despite the Bible being the most accurate and verifiable book of antiquity.
 - (5) The writings of well-accepted ancient authors, such as Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, Caesar, Cicero, Tacitus, Pliny, Homer don’t even come close to possessing the weight of veracity history provides for God’s book.
- J. **7** The way to repair our relationship with our Creator is only found in the Bible (Jn. 14:6).
- (1) God will not force anyone to obey Him (Rom. 10:13; Rev. 22:17).
 - (2) God leaves the choice of ending our alienation with Him entirely to us.
 - (3) Friendship with God is the only road leading to true fulfillment and lasting satisfaction.
 - (4) The Bible shows the way as Jesus Himself so tenderly says, “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*” (Matt. 11:28-30)
- K. The Bible’s golden text is God’s answer to sin, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” (Jn. 3:16)
- (1) It is only through Jesus, God’s Son, that a positive relationship with God can be restored.
 - (2) The Bible tells us those answering God’s call to salvation were “*added to the church*” (Acts 2:47). God’s book tells us Christ is “*the head of the body, the church,*” (Col. 1:18), and “*He is the savior of the body*” (Eph. 5:23). Why? **Col. 1:19-22**
- L. When we obey the good news, the gospel of Christ; God forgives our sins and we become a part of this very precious entity called “*the body of Christ,*” which is the *church of Christ*.

- (1) Only those submitting their entire being to God can enjoy this wonderful restored relationship with Him (Lk. 9:23-26).
- (2) By obeying God, we cleanse our conscience and restore our life to its original purpose of glorifying God.
- M. Those God has forgiven, those God has restored to friendship with Him, those who will live with Him for all eternity are part of this “body” or “church.”
 - (1) Notice from this very brief explanation that the concept of “church” in God’s book is much, much different than what is seen in today’s world.
 - (2) The church in today’s society is nothing but a glorified country club or service club with a religious flavor. If that’s what Dawkins, Hitches and Harris are against; so am I!
 - (3) However, in the Bible the church is the group of people who have obeyed God, who have accepted that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and by His sacrifice and shedding of blood have been baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and their relationship with God is thus repaired and restored.
 - (4) Thus, our first step to true peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment is our choice to accept God’s great gift, believe in His Son, and become a part of His church.

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2. 8 Relationship with self.

- A. As we contemplate repairing our broken relationship with God, it is essential we simultaneously come to grips with our relationship with our self.
 - (1) All of us are fallen creatures due to sin.
 - (2) Sin separates all us from God (Isa. 59:1-2) and makes us objects of God’s wrath.
 - (3) Sin is so hideous and horrible only the death of God’s Son on the cross can atone for it.
 - (4) If we would ever feel good about ourselves, if we would ever hope to find true peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment, we must first feel truly bad about our sin (Matt. 5:3-4).
 - (5) It is only when we admit our sin that we begin to positively deal with it.
- B. God calls us to lives of holiness, lives patterned after the sinless life of His Son (Rom. 8:29).
 - (1) He calls on us to be “*as obedient children...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy, in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’*” (1 Pet. 1:14-16)
 - (2) He calls on us to eliminate lying, filthy language, sexual immorality, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, drunkenness, lewdness, etc. from our lives and replace these hideous things with love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control, etc. (Gal. 5:19-26).
 - (3) Surely the New Atheists, or any thinking person, can see that living such a positively changed life cannot but help lead one to peace of mind and fulfillment?!
- C. Allowing the gospel of Christ to change us in such a manner is at the heart of restoring a positive relationship with God, ourselves and our fellow man.
 - (1) We trade in a life of self-centeredness and self-destruction for a life of service to others gaining peace of mind and fulfillment.
 - (2) And it is Jesus Christ that makes all this possible.
 - (3) Through Him we can gain “*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding*” and that

“will guard our hearts and minds” (Phil. 4:7).

(4) This new life is not gained without effort (Phil. 2:12).

(a) The Bible says we must *“be even more diligent”* (2 Pet. 1:9) to live the life of a Christian and *“go on to perfection”* (Heb. 6:1)

(b) ****** Surely every logical and sane person would find such a life appealing. Do you?

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3. 9 Relationships with others:

- A. There is a famous quotation that says, *“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent.”* As we seek true fulfillment and peace of mind it is critical we realize the great responsibility each of us has towards our fellow man.
- B. The Bible does not merely teach us to *“love one another,”* but Jesus said, *“that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another”* (Jn. 13:34).
 - (1) He goes on to say this standard of love bears evidence to the world we are His disciples (**Jn. 13:35:** *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*).
 - (2) Jesus gave His life for us and we too must be willing to give our lives for our brethren (**1 Jn. 3:16:** *“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”*).
- C. The Bible goes so far as to equate hating our brother with *“murder”* (1 Jn. 3:15).
 - (1) The Bible definition of this type of *“love”* is that we always put the best interests of our fellow man at heart.
 - (2) God shows this grand type of love as He hates sin, but He *“demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Rom. 5:8)
- D. We too show this love to our fellow man when we always seek his best interests.
 - (1) The apostle Paul uses the character of Jesus in this regard for us to imitate as he writes, *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”* (Phil. 2:3-4)
 - (2) This does not mean we ignore sin in the lives of others.
 - (a) On the contrary, we are to meekly and humbly help our fellow man out of sin and help them restore their relationship with God (Matt. 7:3-5).
 - (b) Paul informs us *“if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”* (Gal. 6:1-2)
- E. We must also extend our love to our fellows when they are in need.
 - (1) In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus gives us a view of the final judgment.
 - (a) A very important criteria for judgment will be whether we've extended charity and kindnesses to our fellow man.
 - (b) According to Jesus, when we do these benevolent deeds to others we are in reality doing it to Him.
 - (2) When we have the ability and opportunity to help those in need, we also imitate God: *“But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from*

him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” (1 Jn. 3:17-18)

- F. Thus, our path to true peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment includes our choice to treat every man as our neighbor (Lk. 10:25-37).
- (1) Does that appeal to you?
 - (2) Would the New Atheists, or any person with an ounce of compassion and a modicum of a conscience, reject or ridicule such a philosophy?

III. CONCLUSION: 10

- I. Do you desire true peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment?
 - A. If so, we urge you to restore your relationship with God, with self, and with your fellow man.
 - B. Harkening to the beginning of this lesson do you remember what Solomon learned about the meaning of life? He said, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”* (Eccl. 12:13-14)
2. ** Our lives are short, death is certain, judgment is final and eternity is forever.
3. If we would find peace, happiness and fulfillment in this life and in eternity let us begin today.
4. Invitation