

IS YOUR LIFE FULFILLING?

It is only when we admit our sin that we begin to positively deal with it.

As we consider the world with all its ills; war, murder, theft, rape, jealousy, pride, strife, greed, etc. all exist because of sin. Since we live in this world we cannot escape sin or its effects, but thanks to God we can be forgiven and eliminate sin from our personal lives. This is essential to finding the peace of mind and happiness we so desperately seek.

God calls us to live lives of holiness, lives patterned after the sinless life of His Son. 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 Peter 1:14-16) 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. Surely the New Atheists, or any logically thinking person, can see that living such a positively changed life cannot but help lead one to peace of mind and fulfillment?!

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! We trade in a life of self-centeredness and self-destruction for a life service to others gaining peace of mind and fulfillment! And it is Jesus Christ that makes all this possible! Through Him we can gain *"the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding"* and that *"will guard our hearts and minds"*! (Philippians 4:7). This new life is not gained without effort. The Bible says we must *"be even more diligent"* (2 Peter 1:9) to live the life of a Christian and *"go on to perfection"* (Hebrews 6:1) If such a life appeals to you, we invite you to come and study God's Word with us.

Relationships with others

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.

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). He goes on to say this standard of love bears evidence to the world we are His disciples (John 13:35). Jesus gave His life for us and we too must be willing to give our lives for our brethren (1 John 3:16).

The Bible goes so far as to equate hating our brother with *"murder"* (1 John 3:15). The *"love"* we are to have for one another is not the syrupy sweet *"love"* of the world, nor does it have any sexual connotation, and it doesn't even necessarily mean we *"like"* our brother. The Bible definition of this type of *"love"* is that we always put the best interests of our fellow man at heart. 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."* (Romans 5:8)

We too show this love to our fellow man when we always seek his best interests. When we put the interests of others before our own. 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."* (Philippians 2:3-4) This does not mean we ignore sin in the lives of others. On the contrary, we are to meekly and humbly help our fellow man out of sin and help them restore their relationship with God (Matthew 7:3-5). 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."* (Galatians 6:1-2)

We must also should extend our love to our fellows when they are in need. In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus gives us a view of the final judgment. A very important criterion for judgment will be whether we've extended charity and kindnesses to our fellow man. According to Jesus, when we do these benevolent deeds for others we are in reality doing it to Him. 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 John 3:17-18) Thus, our path to true peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment includes our choice to treat every man as our neighbor (Luke 10:25-37). Does that appeal to you? Would the New Atheists, or any person with an ounce of compassion and a modicum of a conscience, reject or ridicule such a philosophy?

Conclusion

Do you desire true peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment? If so, we urge you to restore your relationship with God, with self, and with your fellow man. Harkening to the beginning of this essay 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."* (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

Our lives are short, eternity is so long. If we would find peace, happiness and fulfillment in this life and in eternity let us begin today. If you are interested in pursuing this further, we would be honored to study God's Word with you and help you in your search. Our contact information is listed below, please let us know how we may help you.

For more information or a free Bible study contact:

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Bible study: Sunday, 9:30 AM; Wednesday, 7:00 PM
Worship: Sunday, 10:30 AM; 5:00 PM

IS YOUR LIFE FULFILLING?

Yes? No?

- Are you a success? Good job? Nice home and family? Bright future?
- Yet do you still feel a bit unsatisfied? Unfulfilled? Something just isn't quite right?

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. But despite these outward trappings of success you still experience a nagging feeling there should be more to life. It is probably safe to say all discerning people have experienced such feelings at some point in their life.

I don't mean to suggest such feelings of dissatisfaction are wrong. Nor are they merely a symptom of life in the twenty-first century. 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. The wise man had the resources and knowledge to conduct his search by engaging in a wide variety of earthly pursuits. From a worldly, human perspective he was eminently successful. He obtained great wealth and wisdom, he experienced all the pleasures life had to offer, and he obtained great power and position. But as the end of his life drew near he felt a great emptiness and wrote these words (Ecclesiastes 1:2-11):

*"Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher;
'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'*

*What profit has a man from all his labor
In which he toils under the sun?*

*One generation passes away, and another generation comes;
But the earth abides forever.*

*The sun also rises, and the sun goes down,
And hastens to the place where it arose.*

*The wind goes toward the south,
And turns around to the north;
The wind whirls about continually,*

And comes again on its circuit.

*All the rivers run into the sea,
Yet the sea is not full;*

*To the place from which the rivers come,
There they return again.*

*All things are full of labor;
Man cannot express it.*

IS YOUR LIFE FULFILLING?

*The eye is not satisfied with seeing,
Nor the ear filled with hearing.*

*That which has been is what will be,
That which is done is what will be done,
And there is nothing new under the sun.
Is there anything of which it may be said,
'See, this is new?'*

*It has already been in ancient times before us.
There is no remembrance of former things,
Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come
By those who will come after."*

Can you sympathize with Solomon? Have you ever entertained similar thoughts? If you have I cordially invite you to read on.

In the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon went on to write many more words describing the empty feelings all of us experience from time to time. His words of wisdom on these matters are most worthy of study. However, something else is of much greater importance. You see, even though Solomon found most things in life did not 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."* (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

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: 1) A relationship with God, 2) A relationship with ourselves, and 3) A relationship with our fellow man.

Relationship with God

Our secular and scientific world is doing all in their power to erase the idea of God from our minds. For example, lately there has been a renewed popularity of atheism under the guidance of writers and speakers such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and others. The New Atheists are critics of all religions, but most of all Christianity. I would be the first to admit many of their criticisms are valid, including criticisms of what they falsely identify as "Christianity." However, 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.

First, they cannot provide satisfying answers explaining the origin and existence of the Universe or the origin of life. 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. They are dismissive and derisive of anyone who would question or suggest an alternative, i.e., that a supernatural force (God) created the Universe and all the life that inhabits it, including man.

The fact is, some scientists, many of which do not believe in God, recognize there are many shortcomings to both the "Big Bang" theory

and the theory of evolution. 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.

As a holder of two graduate degrees, there are scientifically-based reasons I reject the materialistic explanations for the Universe and man's existence. However, the purpose of this essay is not to pursue these issues in depth. If you would like more material along that line, we would be glad to oblige you.

Suffice it to say the heart of our argument for God's existence is the overwhelming evidence of design in our vastly complex material Universe and in every living organism. It is, in our opinion, ludicrous to explain our unimaginably huge and complex Universe popping into existence from nothing. And, even more ridiculous to explain the origin of life as non-living chemicals randomly interacting to produce the abundance and complexity of life seen on our planet. Such theories violate several scientific principles supported by a mountain of experimental evidence. It also seems 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 pops into existence from nothing and lifeless, unintelligent molecules magically gain the ability to organize themselves into complex living creatures.

On the contrary, we believe an infinite being, especially in regards to power and knowledge, created the Universe and the complex life we see all around us. The design manifestly visible throughout the Universe is undeniable evidence there is a Grand Designer. God is the cause of our fabulous Universe not random, unintelligent processes. God has left undeniable evidence He exists and to deny His existence is a monumental mistake on our part. The Bible says the created Universe provides irrefutable evidence that a being exists with *"eternal power and deity"* (Rom. 1:20). Those who fail to recognize the great truths this evidence manifests are *"without excuse."* 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.

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. But, there is more, much more! This same God who has provided us with undeniable evidence of His existence, also requires us to believe *"that He rewards those who diligently seek Him."* (Heb. 11:6) Why? Because *"God created man in His own image"* (Gen. 1:27). 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! Man is at the pinnacle of God's creation! God created man to reflect His glory! His power! His intelligence! His wisdom!

God also created man to reflect His morality and goodness. Unfortunately, man rejected these things and sinned. The wonderful bond and unique closeness between God and man was shattered by sin. God cannot and will not tolerate sin. 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.

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. God reveals this grand scheme of redemption in His book...The Bible. 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. But the New Atheists, and many others,

denigrate and disparage the Bible. We will not take up much space here to defend the Bible, other than saying, that from a bibliographical standpoint, the Bible is the most accurate and verifiable book of antiquity. The writings of well-accepted ancient authors, such as Plato, Aristotle and Sophocles, Caesar, Cicero, Tacitus, Pliny don't even come close to the possessing the weight of veracity history provides for God's book.

Finding our way back to repairing our relationship with our Creator is only found in the Bible. God will not force anyone to obey Him. God leaves the choice of ending our alienation with Him entirely up to us. Friendship with God is the only road leading to true fulfillment and satisfaction. The Bible provides 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."* (Matthew 11:28-30)

The golden text of the Bible provides 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."* (John 3:16) It is only through God's Son that a positive relationship with God can be restored. 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,"* (Colossians 1:18), and *"He is the savior of the body"* (Ephesians 5:23). Why?

"For it pleased the Father that in Him (i.e., Jesus Christ) all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight..." (Colossians 1:19-22).

You see, 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*. Only those submitting their entire being to God can enjoy this wonderful restored relationship with Him. By obeying God, we cleanse our conscience and restore our life to its original purpose, glorifying God!

Most refer to this relationship as being *"saved."* So 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."* Hopefully you will 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. The church in contemporary society is nothing more than a glorified country club or a service club with a religious flavor. 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 their sins forgiven and their relationship with God repaired and restored. Thus, our first step to true peace of mind, happiness and fulfillment is our choice to accept God's great gift and become a part of His church!

Relationship with self

As we contemplate repairing our broken relationship with God, it is essential we simultaneously come to grips with our relationship with our self. All of us are fallen creatures due to sin! Sin separates all us from God! Sin makes us objects of God's wrath! Sin is so hideous and horrible that only the death of God's Son on the cross can atone for it! 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!