

The Unsatisfied life

Unsatisfied?

Scripture:

10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. 11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 (NIV)

Q: What is something you looked forward to a ton only to be disappointed by it?

The first thing people typically notice about me is that I am pretty tall. Whenever people ask me if I play basketball I always respond with that I played in high School.

Basketball was essentially the center of my life. I practiced almost every day of the week, because of that I was either late or didn't attend church for a large swath of my life. But my team was pretty good and I was the starting center.

My Junior year, typically the most important year for high school athletes, our team went really far and ended up winning the State Championship in Virginia. This was the first time in our school's history as well as the first time in about twenty years in our city .

In the locker room following our win the attitude in the room wasn't excited, it was dull at best. I remember one of our teammates looking over to me and saying "I'm waiting for it to set in!". Weeks later, when we were reunioning in the coach's classroom to talk about steps going forward, the coach admitted to everyone that he was "still waiting for it to set in". Needless to say, as far as I know it never set in for many of my teammates, and it never did for me either.

The fact that winning a State Championship did not give me a sense of "I've made it" was immensely unsatisfying to me. This was the climatic moment for any high school athlete, and all I felt was tired.

11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:11

We do live unsatisfied

Q: What percent of Americans say they are happy?

Only **14%** of Americans stated that they were happy during 2020.

It being an odd year because of Covid doesn't diminish from the fact that people have historically been unhappy in life, only **30%** were found to be happy during the same survey done in 2018. Source.

Half of all Americans state that they are very satisfied with their job according to Pew research. The other half of americans only being somewhat to very dissatisfied with their jobs.

It becomes obvious that, as a people, we have struggled to find satisfaction in life.

We CAN be satisfied, in certain ways

The extreme that people may get from seeing statistics like this is that humans can never be satisfied. We can be satisfied in many areas though!

For example, when you have a desire to be innovative it can be satisfied by creating. When you have a desire to give it can be satisfied by giving a gift.

Q: What are moments in life which you find yourself the most satisfied?

Don't feel pushed to give a markedly holy answer such as when I'm serving the poor, which is very much so a legitimate satisfaction.

I hiked up the Big C, which is a hill (a mountain compared to what I am used to) in Berkeley, and got to see a beautiful display of the city as the sun set one friday evening. When I set out just an hour or so before to walk up this mountain I had a desire to see grandeur, a desire to see beauty. Gazing at how the red clouds balanced themselves over the Golden Gate Bridge set upon a backdrop of cloudy mountains in my inmost heart satisfied a reoccurring desire that I have, to see beauty.

The problem is not that we can't feel satisfied whatsoever, but that we try to satisfy a deep desire with things that were never meant to satisfy it.

If a man has a desire for innovation, watching a nice sunset is very unlikely to satisfy it. Using something more concrete, if a man were to have a desire for a good meal or food, telling him to build a cabin is unlikely to please him.

A deeper calling

I would like to argue that in our lives, there is a desire, a deep calling for something, that we often have tried filling with things that were never meant to fill it. There is a deep calling. We try to fill it with our careers, or filling it people and jump from relationship to relationship. Or we try filling it through service to one another, but it is never satisfied.

Satisfying the Cry with the World

C.S Lewis talks about this cry in chapter 10 of his book Mere Christianity

Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise.

Every time we try something new or get into something which brings us immense joy, we often venture to say "this is that which will satisfy me".

The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy.

They all end up disappointing when we try finding our meaning within them

Lewis describes 3 ways we can handle this disappointment

1. "The Fools Way"

The fools way says to just try something different. If you're not satisfied with your current spouse, divorce them and try another. If this job grows boring, quit it and do another. The fool's way is a constant thrill of saying "I've found it! That which gives my life meaning" only to become disappointed and end up moving on soon after

2. The cynic's way

He soon decides that the whole thing was moonshine. "Of course," he says, "one feels like that when one's young. But by the time you get to my age you've given up chasing the rainbow's end." And so he settles down and learns not to expect too much and **represses the part of himself which used, as he would say, "to cry for the moon."**

The way of the 'Disillusioned "Sensible Man."' as Lewis calls it is to repress that which calls out within you. To give up trying to be satisfied. And that's dangerous. Since what if that thing which will finally give our lives meaning is actually out there?

The soul knows for certain only that it is hungry. The important thing is that it announces its hunger by crying. A child does not stop crying if we suggest to it that perhaps there is no bread. It goes on crying just the same.

The danger is not lest the soul should doubt whether there is any bread, but lest, by a lie, it

should persuade itself that it is not hungry. It can only persuade itself of this by lying, for the reality of its hunger is not a belief, it is a certainty.

Simone Weil, The Soul Knows Its Hunger

The reason why humans keep up the endeavors is in search of that which will satisfy our hunger for meaning. And this leads to the third way Lewis describes how we can respond to this hunger, the Christian way

3. "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists"

A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it

Mere Christianity

All of this is to say, there is satisfaction to those desires we have deep down inside, and the bible has the answer of how to live that satisfying life. It details what is required and what we need to set our hopes on in order to receive any measure of satisfaction in life.

And to make it obvious, the desire that we have so acutely is God, a loving God and a future purpose.

If what the bible says is true, and we'll explore exactly what the bible has to say about our meaning, then we have all reasons to believe that there is an answer that can satisfy our lives. I would like to attest that in my personal life, I have been able to experience this and I hope that at the very least you want to explore this.

We have a desire, a want for God that when left unsatisfied can leave our whole existence wanting. The want for God cries out in a desire for Him and purposefulness. That it will not all just end as "chasing after the wind".

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs after You, O God.

Psalms 42:1 (BSB)

Just as animals have a desire for water, we have a desire for God and purposefulness. And we'll see how those two things are greatly intertwined