

The affairs of the heart - the longings of life

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Preacher: Tom Price

[0 : 00] Well, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to you to this Be Thinking Talk which is part of our events week.! You've all seen the postcards and the different events we've been having.

So tonight is Saturday the 5th. We have the Be Thinking Talk. You might be interested, we're also having tomorrow on Sunday at 11 o'clock.

Our meeting here will be following the same theme as this evening about the heart. So you might like to come along to that tomorrow. And then in the evening we have a very special event at 6 o'clock.

We have any questions. So if you have any questions relating to the theme or maybe not even relating to the theme, we'll have a panel up here and people can ask their questions and we'll see what sort of answers they give.

What we say is we don't know all the answers but we're not afraid of the questions. So you're very warmly welcome to come along tomorrow morning and tomorrow evening. So this evening is a Be Thinking Talk.

[1 : 11] That title takes its name from a website called bethinking.org. Is it .org or .org.uk? .org. And our speaker is the founding editor of that website.

And you might like to look at it. It's got some excellent things on it. Let me just introduce Tom Price. We're really pleased to have you with us for these few days.

Tom's been with us yesterday and helped us with a film discussion, which was an excellent time. Been with us for the men's breakfast. So we've fed you this morning. And he's going to lead this talk.

Tom is an educator in sort of spirituality and philosophy. And he goes round to all sorts of places, including universities. So he's very well qualified to do this talk.

Can we give him a little ripple of welcome as he comes to speak? Thank you very much. It's really great to be with you again this evening.

[2 : 16] All of us, each one of us, is committed to something. Every single one of us is committed to something. We all get an essential sense of being valuable, being distinct, being important from somewhere or something in our lives.

What are you committed to? That's what I want to think about this evening. What am I committed to? What are you committed to? C.S. Lewis, the writer of the Chronicles of Narnia, once wrote this. What does not satisfy when we find it was not the thing we were desiring. It's a fascinating quote and goes in so many different ways for us.

I want to start off this evening by looking at a film called 13 Conversations About One Thing. It was written by and directed by Jill Sprecher, who, after graduating with a degree in philosophy and literature, decided to write a film after working as a production manager and a line producer.

The film is all about happiness. It's a series of conversations, a series of discussions about happiness. Before we watch a clip, let me just say, some of you don't have English as a first language, so I have the potential to talk rather fast sometimes and sometimes use big words, unfortunately.

[3 : 43] What I'd like you to do is I'd like you to wave at me if you don't understand, and then I'll just rewind a little bit and try and explain what I've said. Don't feel embarrassed about doing that.

You'll help me to be able to make myself clearer. So, in the first scene of the film, 13 Conversations About One Thing, a couple called Patricia and Walker have a conversation that goes along these lines.

Patricia says, What is it that you want? And Walker replies, What everyone wants? To experience life. To wake up enthused. To be happy. As the clip goes on, it follows through to a conversation

between two men at a bar.

One man is optimistic, hopeful about being able to find happiness in life. The other man is slightly more cynical about being able to find happiness in life.

After they've played the clip, we're going to talk to each other. We're going to talk to our neighbours, talk to the people next door to us about which of these different perspectives we think we might identify with or we think is more interesting or perhaps more true.

[4 : 53] I'll leave you to watch the clip. Jean and Troy there having a conversation about hope and love and the possibility of happiness.

Troy says, I earned it. I worked hard. I put in the hours. I fought well. I went to court and I won. And Jean says, Show me a happy man and I'll show you a disaster waiting to happen.

Just turn to the person sitting next to you and talk about who you think is right. Is Troy right? You can work hard and get happiness through doing well, through fighting well, through doing the right thing perhaps.

Or Jean saying, Actually, happiness is unachievable. Happiness, show me a happy man and I'll show you a disaster waiting to happen. I'll give you a couple of minutes to talk about that with the person sitting next to you. Okay, I'd like to try and collect some of your points of view now if that's possible.

Who'd be willing to tell me what you were talking about and some of what your conclusions were? Steve? Oh, no. Yeah. I don't know if I made this, but we were just talking about what is real happiness?

[6 : 07] Is it based on material needs or is it more spiritually based? Okay. So, it's more material. You get what you wish for. You want money. It's all the baggage that comes with it. Okay. Yeah.

That's great. Thank you. What other things were you talking about? Did you believe that happiness was possible? It's going to get you for the recording. There were probably half truths in both of those.

There are shades of truths in both of those because it's better to work at something than not to work at something, but ultimate happiness is not necessarily achievable through work.

And at the same time, ultimate happiness is not achievable absolutely and completely in this life. So, both are true in some senses. Okay.

Thank you. That's great. Thank you, both of you, for your views. This next clip shows the chap winning the lottery as Jean described it.

[7 : 09] After that, we'll have a conversation and a discussion about is happiness just about enjoying ourselves or is there something deeper to happiness? So, here's the clip. Okay. Turn to the people around you and is happiness all about enjoying ourselves or is it something deeper?

What do you think will make you happy in life? What do you think will make you happy in life? And why do you think that will make you happy in life? I'll give you a few minutes to talk about that with your neighbor.

Okay. Let's try and talk about these questions together. What sort of answers were you coming up with? What sorts of things were you saying to each other?

I come to you. The danger is if you nod at me it's a bit like bidding. Well, I like things on an ordinary level.

I quite like my job and I like a number of things that I quite like doing. On a more exalted level it's very difficult to define what would make you happy.

[8 : 21] I suppose you could say relate it to God but that's almost losing yourself in things that you can't quite define. So we ran aground there.

Thank you very much. That's a great comment. Thank you. What other things were you talking about? What other definitions of happiness?

What other reflections were you sharing? That for me is the problem. I'm not quite sure what we mean by happy. It can mean all kinds of things to different people.

It's one of these semantic things. What does the dictionary define as happy or happiness? So happiness probably is something deeper a bit like Steve was saying perhaps like contentment which has a kind of long-term implication to it but then again people talk about enjoying life so they all have seem to have similar connotations but I don't really quite know what that word's supposed to mean anyway so I think it is entirely personal.

How about a strategy to be happy? Is it made difficult by not knowing what happiness is? What sort of a strategy do you think will make us happy as human beings?

[9 : 38] Well I don't even know whether you have to have a strategy or not. I mean some people do have a strategy and have a goal and if they don't reach it then they're not happy they're disappointed so in that case it may be linked to expectations but if like Rob was saying talking on the day-to-day level the normalities of life is happy doing that then perhaps there aren't that many grand expectations so there isn't disappointment so actually generally you are happy it just depends if you have expectations I suppose Thank you very much How about from you guys?

Yeah Would you be willing to share with us what you were saying? Enjoying ourselves of course we say happiness but if I have another people we can also feel happier than enjoying ourselves I think that is something deeper So it has to do with relating to other people Yes In a particular way relating to other people That's something to think on Thank you very much thanks for your comments I hope we'll be able to talk more as we continue I'd like this to be a dialogue rather than me talking towards you in one direction I'd like it to be a two-way street if that's possible There is the sense that whatever position you're coming from whether you're coming from a position of no religious beliefs no spiritual beliefs or convictions or strong religious beliefs or convictions that as human beings we are people who long for happiness we seem to have a desire in us to be happy to find happiness and perhaps to make other people happy as well

We sometimes look to success to try and make us happy We look to all sorts of different things to try and make us happy different kinds of success obviously sporting success perhaps success in a capitalistic enterprise sense sometimes we look to wealth as something that will make us happy the idea that by acquiring things by acquiring possessions material possessions we might make ourselves happy or happier we might fill this longing for happiness there's the idea that perhaps by having good health we might find happiness or by having good experiences experiencing wonderful things in life that might not be so wonderful to you bungee jumping from a high tower it's not me I'm wondering what the 1 and the 68 on his hands mean whether that's the number of times he's bungee jumped that day or who knows who knows what it means sometimes also we look to family and friends to make us happy to family and community and I think all of these things that I'm mentioning are good things they're good things worthwhile things it's worthwhile to work at being a success in what you do it's worthwhile to work at earning money it's worthwhile to work at your family and your community relationships and giving to people around you there's also the idea of finding love as a way of finding long lasting meaningful happiness finding true love perhaps the whole idea of a true love experience perhaps by experiencing long lasting love we will fill this unquenchable or maybe we will quench this thirst in us for happiness others of us find ourselves drawn into retail therapy sometimes as a way of making ourselves feel better

I don't think this is just one sex or the other who get drawn into this as a guy I have to say that sometimes buying a new gadget a new toy maybe a new car or a new motorbike makes me feel really I don't know it sort of makes me feel good somehow somehow buying things and acquiring things does make us feel good I don't know why that is really but it can make us feel great well this week has been about thinking about affairs of the heart that's the kind of theme the idea of this week is exploring what it means to have an affair in your heart what it means to want various things in your heart and perhaps sometimes to find it difficult to choose there are deep longings in our hearts I find deep longings in my heart for lots of different things in life perhaps gadgets perhaps motorbikes or perhaps love perhaps happiness and I've tried in many different ways to try and fill those thirsts those longings we all want to be happy successful intimate with others healthy safe whole as people not fragmented as people we want to be attractive and popular satisfied and content in a place that's home to us but having said all that

I started off by saying that we're all committed to something no one of us is free from being committed to something we all are committed to some way of being happy we all get a sense of value and a sense of being different and important and distinctive from somewhere or something it doesn't matter what perspective we're coming from we're all committed to something what might you be committed to where do you get that strong sense of being valuable and meaningful from well for C.S. Lewis who's the guy who wrote the Chronicles of Narnia a sense of being meaningful a sense of identity a sense of purpose was a very interesting subject for him he was really interested in writing about this when C.S. Lewis he became a Christian when he was a professor of medieval literature at Oxford the first book that he wrote was an allegory called

[16:08] The Pilgrim's Regress it's not very well known but it's a really interesting story in the story a traveller called John young man has a vision he sees through a hole in a wall a brick wall a vision of an island he smells the smell of the sea he hears the sound of some distant music that sort of he finds himself being drawn through this window towards this island and it's as if somehow the island and this vision of the island is calling out to his own heart and soul he finds that it awakens for him a longing a deep buried longing perhaps Lewis explores these longings in the book The Pilgrim's Regress and it's really interesting as he follows the story of John all the way through towards the end of the book John meets a hermit called History and History the hermit explains to John some of what the longings in his heart are he says there are three longings there's the longing for home a place that is safe and secure a place with no death a place with no pain there's a longing deep down in

John for intimacy for love for closeness with another person a closeness that isn't satisfied by the romantic relationships that John has been involved in as he travels and there's an inner longing for peace a deep down longing for peace and purity that he finds within himself as well whatever you think of all of that let me just go through part of what C.S. Lewis meant by this by home he meant it's broader than a physical dwelling a place like a house it's this place of refuge and safety where some of the worldly cares fade and the people that you love become a focus in a way perhaps some people have said that this is the kind of home that the human heart longs for perhaps the hope of heaven is this same hope Jim Carrey recently said that honestly what I really want now is to be happy spiritually at peace with all his success he finds inside his own heart a yearning perhaps to find some sort of peace some sort of happy spiritual experience

Terry Hatcher with the renaissance of her career with the Desperate Housewives series said I never thought I'd be over 40 and have no one to go to dinner with nor someone who loves me and whom I trust but here I am sad and true leading neurologist called Oliver Sachs who's professor of neurology and psychiatry at Columbia he's not a Christian believer he is he doesn't have a Christian faith at all he wrote this in his book The Awakening a very very interesting thing to say for all of us have a basic intuitive feeling that once we were whole and well at ease at peace at home in the world totally united with the grounds of being and that we lost this primal happy innocent state and fell into our present sickness and suffering we had something of infinite value infinite preciousness and beauty and we lost it we spend our time our lives searching for what we have lost here's a clip from the film

Alfie where towards the end of the film Alfie is experiencing the same longing for peace for a sense of peace of mind in his own heart Ernest Becker won the Pulitzer Prize for his book The Denial of Death in his book he makes the point that every single person is searching for a cosmic significance he says that our need for worth is so powerful it's such a powerful driving force in us that whenever we base our identity on something and our value on something we essentially come to deify that which we base our identity and value on we look at it with all the passion and intensity of worship and devotion even if we have absolutely no spiritual or religious beliefs I wonder what you think of that statement I wonder what you think of his perspective there at the end when I finish speaking in about ten minutes we're going to have the opportunity for you to ask questions for us to have a more free-ranging discussion about anything if you like about any topic but if you're interested in talking about what I've been talking about then that would be great too to interact in that way and to hear your perspective and it's absolutely fine to completely disagree any question any objection is entirely welcome and allowed that's absolutely fine

Tim Keller says that everyone gets their sense of identity their sense of being distinct and valuable from somewhere or something I said that we are all committed to something everyone gets our identity our sense of being distinct and valuable from somewhere now I find what Ernest Becker said the quote I just read interesting because as I come to this I come to it as a Christian reading Becker and it really gets me thinking I wonder what you think when you read the quote that he wrote the sorts of things that he says and I really like to hear what your reaction is for me as a Christian when I come to read what he says about how we deify that which we base our identity on even if we have no religious or spiritual perspective I tend to think about sin and about what sin means and the first commandment of the ten commandments is you shall have no other gods before me and for a lot of people defining sin understanding what sin is is it sort of breaking the rules it's not doing the right thing it's going against

[22 : 28] God's rules well perhaps sin is not just about doing bad things but making good things into ultimate things perhaps it's this process of deifying that which is not God that which is good that which is important that which is valuable family and love and success and achievement these things are valuable and good things worth working for but as a Christian I'm asking could this become my God could I deify it and wondering whether that would be the right thing to do you might have a totally different perspective but from the viewpoint of my Christian beliefs the setting out or seeking to establish a sense of who I am a sense of value a sense of self by making something else in my life more central to my significance and purpose and happiness is perhaps something that God might be concerned about that God might be interested in because in a way maybe we're rejecting I'm rejecting God by making something else more important than him putting something else in his place something else where I draw my significance my sense of purpose my sense of meaning from and maybe this is what the heart of what the

Bible calls idolatry or having other gods we base our identity and value we essentially deify these things this is exactly what Becker says our need for worth is so powerful that it almost happens automatically that we come to deify that which we put our identity and value upon we may come to look at it with all the passion and intensity of religious devotion and worship Tim Keller goes on to say that perhaps sin is the despairing refusal not being willing to find your deepest identity in your relationship in your engagement in your relating to God perhaps sin is seeking to become yourself to get an identity in one of the good things that we might turn into ultimate things as I watched the clip from Alfie I found that really interesting as well watching it as a Christian I found that fascinating now you might have a completely different take on what Alfie meant when he talked about not having peace and if you haven't got that you haven't got anything but what I hear is this idea of human beings searching something that the Old

Testament calls the shalom peace of God it's very hard to describe what shalom is we just went for a curry earlier in the evening sometimes when I've eaten really good food and I'm around people that I'm enjoying and like maybe I'm around my family at Christmas time or maybe I'm around people who I feel close to there's a sense of aha and things are right with the world and things are at peace and there are no big barriers or troubles on the horizon that's getting to what it means to talk about shalom in the Old Testament sense according to the Bible we're meant to experience shalom and the Old Testament describes shalom as not just an intellectual idea of peace but an experience of peace an all encompassing sense of well-being and at the heart of it is a peace with God it enables and propels true peace with others and it enables peace with ourselves too in John chapter 14

Jesus says this I got a bit ahead of myself all who love me will do what I say my father will love them and we will come and make our home with each one of them I'm leaving you with a gift peace of mind and heart and the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give Paul goes on later in the New Testament to describe how since we have been made right in God's sight by faith we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us and so the idea here is that we're all committed to something every single one of us is committed to something and from Ernest Becker's perspective if we're not careful we can make good things ultimate things and in making good things ultimate things in getting a sense of identity and value and purpose from merely good things made into ultimate things we run the risk of having a

God in front of God where we draw our purpose and our sense of purposefulness from but perhaps as human beings we're searching for this shalom peace perhaps that's what we're looking for when we when we look around for happiness in life perhaps the affairs of our hearts are reachings out in some way for a relationship that we were meant to experience with God an all encompassing relationship not merely an intellectual ascent but this shalom peace which is made possible through Jesus and his work on the cross I wonder what you make of all that it's a lot to digest it's a lot to think about it's a lot of stuff to claim without perhaps giving many reasons or evidences to claim it you might feel that you'd like to know more about reason and evidence you might want to ask a question that's completely different why don't we get some coffee and then we can sit down and we'll take some questions and we'll think through some of these things together ok I think what we'll try and do is we'll try and start and then maybe the coffee will come sorry for luring coffee in front of you it will come and we'll have some refreshments so we can keep chatting who would like to ask a question or to reflect back on what you've heard maybe you have an opinion that you'd like to put forward what do you make of all of that do you think that do you think that anything I've said is

unreasonable or unfair what's your perspective please it's really a question of clarification when you said deify yes that's a word that we don't often use but the word deify you meant make something into god or treat something as if it is god or relate to something in the way you would expect to relate to god have I understood that correctly thank you so much for clarifying yeah thank you that's absolutely right yeah yeah sorry okay please yeah go on this is a literature question okay okay [29 : 38] I'm very puzzled by these magazines like hello and closer and so on which is not a genre that appeals to me but it's what seems I can understand you know you want to look at celebrities and think oh they have such a happy life that's something I want to aspire to yes but that isn't what you get in them what you get in them is how unhappy they are and all their things are going wrong and how they're getting drunk and so on these magazines is it chadenfreude or is it that you think you say even though they're that well there's an anthropologist sitting behind you who's desperate to answer the question I'm speaking on behalf of my mother who's not here yes she couldn't be with us this evening I know for many women who read these magazines that they get happiness out of seeing that other people aren't happy so they can feel better for themselves it's kind of twisted but my experience female world that's why they read these magazines trash mags thank you yes

I think there's a bit more to it than that actually I agree that some people do feel that way but also there's a sense that there's an involvement in other people's lives whether it's dealing with their problems women love to talk about their problems don't they when they get together and possibly our society has gone to the situation where women don't always have a close friend to talk to and this is sort of like a substitute for close friendship where you can talk about problems and involvement in other people's lives albeit by proxy or perhaps that actually feeds into some of what we were talking about getting a sense of identity from other things and maybe if we are some way involved with these celebrities because we know the intimacies of their private lives then maybe that in some way alleviates our own value because we might feel like we're in a circle in some way or that we know them

I was just going to say this I think there's an element of voyeurism as well what does the word mean voyeurism explain it for somebody looking in from the outside I think voyeurism is a sort of being nosy about somebody else's life being able to look in on somebody else's life when actually you don't know them yeah okay that's great thank you thanks please I have one Muslim friend in my class and every Friday he goes to mosque to pray and he mustn't drink any alcohol in his country Saudi Arabia he said if he don't go mosque or if he drink alcohol he feel guilty

I think that reason he feel guilty he's not sure whether he died after he died whether he will go to heaven or not I think but christian believe there will be heaven after they died after they died I think that's best happiness as christian yeah thank you thank you thank you what do you think about that I think I think you answered your own question in quite a precise way I suppose!

the experience that is available to somebody who starts to experience this shalom peace of God that we are talking about it's not pie in the sky when you die it's not only for the afterlife but it's for now too the bible talks about how we will know God walking with us now we'll be aware of him we'll be aware of his presence we'll be aware of his care of his interest in us in a moment by moment day to day way and that I think does give you if you experiencing that can you imagine how that gives you a confidence about what will happen later it answers the question of what will happen to me with a profound hope and a hope that's very tangible if that's your ongoing experience and are there any other reflections or comments or questions please it's just a word I mentioned earlier this word contentment

[35 : 16] I did always think that that was perhaps the key word something that was related perhaps to this shalom because a contentment doesn't need anything else you're at that point and even Paul says you know I've learnt the secret of contentment whether in much or in little etc etc so that sounds like a shalom sort of thing and yet I've met people who don't have a Christian faith and therefore don't have an assurance of things to come and yet they've expressed a real contentment with their life so that's rather a strange thing but I suppose as a Christian myself I would have to assume something else is going on there whether it is actually a denial of things and not even thinking beyond the now then maybe one could say yeah

I feel content but again it's the use of language isn't it people can use that word to mean something that the Bible doesn't necessarily mean of course I think as valuable as experience is and as wonderful as experience is that we do have to be quite careful if we evaluate if we judge the truth of something only on the basis of subjective experience and feelings could be quite funny I

think merely just from a philosophical point of view that it could be quite dangerous actually it's not a very good way to work out what's happening or what's true by just going how you feel or just by the experiential and I think it's very good to line up different streams of evidence different streams of confirmation and authority that will inform our convictions

I would agree but I think you know the ordinary person on the street if you like would count experience as something that's real that's reality for them and so you know that's something for them that therefore is a fact I've experienced it and that's it that's what I'm going to measure things by but then the thing is is reality truth and I don't think it is there's a difference between reality and truth I think and that's where I think there is a divergence between the two okay at least the reality that they experience or at least the reality that they think they're experiencing yes of course yeah go for it yeah please yeah I was just going to say I think there is a danger in saying that being a Christian makes you happy because there are lots of Christians who aren't happy I mean C.S. Lewis one of his most famous books of course was about grief true and Shalom I think is not quite the same thing as happiness anyway it's not an English concept is it the Germans talk about Heimat which is closer I think but that's the yeah I mean it's I mean in what sense was Job happy and what sense was Jeremiah happy well they weren't of course and yet you could say in a sense they had that peace so I think you know if I'm going to say that well you can say that Christianity makes you happy I mean you have to explain what it is you know I mean what Jesus says I give you peace peace peace of mind as you said he ever said it was going to make you happy yeah perhaps terminology here is difficult because happy is so loaded as a very feelings focused thing I must always be happy you know but actually perhaps we're talking about a deeper definition of happiness

Philip please I think time frame is important there's how things are now how we feel about them now how things will be in the future how we will feel in the future so Steve was saying that Christianity doesn't make you happy I think I disagree with that I think the basic promise of Jesus is that you will be happy but not necessarily straight away all the time I think that there is a Christianity promises a fulfillment of all longings which I think you could rightly describe as happiness so speaking as a Christian I read in the Bible that one day there will be no pain or sorrow or tears but that at this present time there still is pain and there still is sorrow and there still is tears but it's not the same with

[40 : 51] Jesus that's a one copes with it and approaches it and even experiences it in a different way than without Jesus so I think there's a sense in which we have a peace now even despite other things going on and in the future there's a fulfillment of that so as a Christian that's the way I would look at that time frame thing thank you would anybody else like to continue the same thread or did you want to ask a different question maybe you've got a question that was always on your mind that you wondered if a Christian would ever let you ask that question can I invite you can I dare to invite you to ask a difficult question perhaps that you haven't asked before please this isn't on that I was just thinking in relation to C.S.

Lewis's list of three longings yes from a Christian perspective could you look at them in relation to God so being God making it being at home with God and being a peace of love looking looking at something which you can't see with your own eyes something which you have to imagine so I'm thinking maybe it's just a nice way of thinking about God if you look at longings we have in the real world and the material world and then applying them to God

Lewis felt that Dante was the greatest poet that ever written anything and he talked about how Dante's writing some of it Lewis felt made the point that if the romantic longing if the longing for intimacy is appropriately followed then that can open up that can flower with God's work and his help into relationship with God so by perhaps following the sunbeam up to the sun we we can begin to engage with God in a more human way a more tangible way a more more sort of real way perhaps yeah so thank you that's actually it's really useful okay any other questions yeah please thank you please I happen to remember this one thing that C.S.

Lewis said I think it might have been in grief observed he said it's no use knocking at heaven's door for earthly comfort it's not what they offer there and I think that relates to happiness because you wouldn't necessarily expect your grief to be assuaged certainly not instantly or your problem solved instantly that's not quite the sort of peace that God offers peace but I wouldn't really be able to define exactly what peace is offered but it's not the same thing is it I don't think any one of us would disagree with you because I'm sure there are moments in all of our lives where we've gone through

really hard times and we've sort of said God take this away make me feel better make me happy right now and that's sort of perhaps maybe what I feel Lewis was getting at by the quote that you mentioned Lewis also said that that sometimes suffering and sometimes God allowing us to go through things points out to us that something's wrong with the world that if everything was if nothing was if there was no pain if there was if there was no mourning if there was no trouble ever if we never experienced any lack of anything then perhaps we would never realize that there was there had been something that went wrong with the world

Chesterton talks about it in terms of that there was this golden ship that went down earlier in the world's history and perhaps we would have never been aware of the crash of the fall and that's what Lewis is trying to get at I think by saying that something has happened and something has gone wrong with the world it's in a fallen and a broken state both broken in terms of our relationship with God but also in terms of our relationships with each other and our relationships with ourselves and the environment as well on the planet that's a really great point to leave things on I think thank you so much for making it thank you very much for coming this evening I hope it's been interesting to you I'm just going to give the microphone back to Philip who will just tell you very quickly did you have something you wanted to say did you okay well go on please let's carry on I think when most people do good thing they can happier but when someone when someone slander another people or stab on another people also they can feel happier we can can we say that happiness

[46 : 56] I just wonder yeah there again the danger of experience as the only point where we choose feelings as the only point where we choose what's true and real yeah yeah thank you it's very useful thanks very much for coming this evening oh okay yeah please yeah okay I want to ask one question for you for you but maybe before I want to explain my opinion I I think I I think that maybe one person it's it's different one person who have something to believe or something for wake up every morning for fighting the life that not don't have anything and

I want to ask if you think that it's important the difference because we are talking about happiness and how can we catch or touch the happiness and I want to ask if you think that it's better think in happiness or not think in happiness because it's true it's difficult because you can think that if you think in happiness and okay how I can do it but maybe if you think a lot you don't have happiness and it's real a difference in the people who not think only life and people who think and try to catch happiness what because it's always I have heard this ask sorry this question or this subject many times that it's better know or not know for life you know

I can't speak very well it's better to know or now say the last bit again please just the last it's it's better life knowing the things or thinking or maybe it's better only life and not know anything you know maybe have you seen for example the film Truman Show yeah it's better than Truman know or not know good yeah good because he can be happy yeah so Truman the Truman Show film for those of you who haven't seen it Truman is born on camera and he never until he's an adult finds out that he is in a TV show everybody that he knows even his wife everyone around him is an actor or actress it's all a complete soap opera and his life is broadcast out to the whole country to the world everybody's watching in lots of different countries it's the most popular

TV show ever and it's all about does he want to find out what's true does he want to escape does he want to be perhaps risk not being as happy but no reality there's the story I remember that's told it's a fictional story about a guy called One Mug and One Mug is a student let's say he's a student here at the University of Sussex One Mug goes and he starts to study physics and at the end of his first year exams he scores five marks out of 500 in a multiple choice questionnaire One Mug got into Sussex on a sports scholarship he's not a very bright guy he's not a very smart person so the professors all sit down and have a meeting what are we going to do with this guy he's not very smart so they decide to begin to trick him into thinking that he is the most brilliant student that has ever been to

Sussex University they begin a campaign of deception the next term one mug goes into a lesson and he raises his hand and he asks a question and it is a ridiculous question it's a silly question but the professor stops the lecture and says one mug that is the best question I have ever heard I'm going to write a book and three research papers to answer your question the year goes on and one mug's deception continues he continues to be given brilliant marks thinking that he is getting better and better at the subject well eventually he graduates from his degree he gets a first which is the top mark you can get the professors sit down and have another meeting when one mug decides to stay on and do an MA and then a PhD eventually the campaign is continuing and one mug has

become a professor in fact he doesn't know anything about the subject that he teaches on and all of his students have to go to another lecturer afterwards he's supervising 25 different doctoral dissertations a year and the

[52 : 16] British government are flying him all over the world to consult on special problems in his field time and newsweek interview one mug and they interview him and they're in on the scam too everybody is in on the scam everybody is telling one mug he is brilliant but in reality he doesn't know anything that he's talking about he's talking dribble one mug reads his own interviews in time and newsweek he puts them down looks into the air and says scintillating I am so interesting the sort of thoughts that go through one mug's head the sort of thoughts that one mug thinks in his heart are my life is meaningful and has purpose I do work that is important to people and helps people I love the people around me I am loved by the people around me I'm living a meaningful and important life he genuinely believes these things and the question is would you choose one mug's life if you had the choice would you choose to live his life knowing you wouldn't know but knowing at this point at the point of choice that it was a complete deception would you choose perhaps you have children one day would you choose to allow them to put them into the system where they could be one mug and live his life what would you choose because

I understand that not all sorry no not all this question about the children would you yeah would you choose to be one mug one one mug the guy who is tricked or would you choose for if you had children would you choose for them to be the person who is tricked yeah would you choose a life of deception but happiness for your child yeah the deception and happiness and the other truth truth for my child and you no it's different for me the truth of course I think that my son have to choose not I yeah good answer so if we're saying that we wouldn't if you're sitting here thinking I'm attracted to one mug's life but I wouldn't choose it what you're really saying is this you're saying that there's one more thing that's more important than whether or not something works for you or makes you feel happy and that's whether or not it's true yeah it's certainly a theme that's popular in film isn't it the idea of the question do we know reality do we even want to know reality perhaps is another question can we know reality even if we want to yeah how can we get through our own subjective personal perspectives to be able to know reality can we ever claim to know reality in in one mug situation his reality doesn't equal truth yeah yes yes yes thank you really these films sorry no I think it was me

I think I knocked it it's interesting in a way as Steve says about the matrix that this is a theme of films and we side with the people who wants the truth in the big court cases as well we want the truth to come out these are the heroes yes thank you okay finish with one more question did anybody else have a question they wanted to ask Anthony did okay I have to come over to him because he's on the sound desk just thinking about that choice between deception and happiness and reality and truth I wondered if many people today find themselves in that dilemma they're looking for happiness but they find that the truth is that they can't get happiness so they they're you know choosing between do they just live a deception and pretend that they've got happiness they've got contentment when really they haven't or do they face up to the fact that life is meaningless and they're never going to find happiness and just you know live a sort of resign to cynicism yeah that's right yeah that's really interesting idea isn't it yeah I think many people that I speak to on the streets pretty much resign themselves to this is it

I think many people think in general life is really not that good and so they just carry on living and do what they do and get into some routine and have a few enjoy enjoyments but that's it I think expectations maybe are dropped now it always strikes me is that the bible talks about how you don't have love on its own and you don't have faith on its own you also have hope and perhaps the answer to resigning ourselves perhaps to cynicism that we can never find happiness or giving ourselves over to just being practical no big questions can be answered there's no point trying to think trying to work out how we get this happiness how we find this peace perhaps the answer there is hope that there may be an answer that there may be somebody searching for me in the same way that I may be searching for God the bible promises that if you search for God with all your heart you will find him thank you so much for your contribution

[59 : 19] I've really enjoyed it and it's been a pleasure to be here with you these last couple of days can we just say thank you to Tom for this excellent evening thank you very much said at the beginning this is a be thinking talk and I think it's fulfilled exactly that hasn't it made us think and so we're very grateful for Tom for leading us in that which has been absolutely excellent please stay

around and chat as long as you like within reason tomorrow we'll actually be thinking about the same topic in the Sunday morning meeting at 11 o'clock so if you would like to hear some more and think some more about that please come along then and of course there's any questions tomorrow at 6 so it would be great if you wanted to come and hear some more and be involved with some more of those things but anyway thanks ever so much to everybody thank you