

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. All of us, each one of us, is committed to something. Every single one of us is committed to something.

[2 : 22] 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?

[5 : 57] Oh, no. Yeah. I don't know if I need this, but we were just talking about what is real happiness? Is it based on material needs or is it more spiritually based?

Okay. So, do more material, kind of you get what you wish for. You want money. It's all the baggage that comes with it. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. That's great. Thank you. What other things are we talking about?

Did you believe that happiness was possible? I'm just 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 Gene 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 neighbour. 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.

[8 : 15] On a more exalted level, it's very difficult to define what would make you happy. I suppose you could say relate it to God but that's almost losing yourself in things 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 is supposed to mean anyway.

[9 : 23] 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?

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.

[10:44] 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 is something to think on.

Thank you very much. Thanks for your comments. I hope we will be able to talk more as we continue. I would like this to be a dialogue rather than me talking towards you in one direction. I would like it to be a two-way street if that is possible. There is the sense that whatever position you are coming from whether you are 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.

[12:07] 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 one and the 68 on his hands mean. Whether that's the number of times he's bungee jumped that day or 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.

[13:20] 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 the 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.

[14:34] 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 was 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.

[15:54] 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 *The Pilgrim's Regress*.

It's not very well known, but it's a really interesting story. In the story, a traveller called John, a 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. He finds himself being drawn through this window towards this island. 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*.

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.

[17:07] 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.

[18:32] 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.

[20:02] 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 of 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.

[21 : 14] 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'd 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're of 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's sort of breaking the rules.

[22 : 26] It's not doing the right thing. It's going against 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? I'm 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, this 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.

[23 : 58] 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 and sometimes when I've eaten really good food and I'm around people that I'm enjoying and like and 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.

[25 : 40] 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 purpose purposefulness from.

[27 : 19] But perhaps as human beings we're searching for this shalom peace. Perhaps that's what we're looking for 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 feel that 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. Okay, 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.

[28 : 41] 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 anything I've said is unreasonable or unfair?

What's your perspective? Please, Phil. It's really a question of clarification. When you said deify, 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. Can I ask a question?

Go on. This is a literature question. Okay. Okay. I'm very puzzled by these, I think, magazines like Hello and Closer and so on. Which is not a genre that appeals to me.

[29 : 47] But it's what seems that I can understand, you know, that 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 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.

So what is the attraction of these magazines? Is it schadenfreude 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, you 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.

[31 : 06] I mean, women love to talk about their problems, don't they, and when they get together and possibly our society has gone, you know, to the situation where women don't always have a

close friend to talk to and, you know, this is sort of like a substitute for close friendship where you can talk about problems and involvement in other people's lives, albeit, you know, by proxy or, you know.

Yeah, perhaps that actually, you know, feeds into some of what we were talking about, 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're sort of, we might feel like we're in their inner circle in some way or that we know them.

Yeah, go on. I was just going to say this, I think there's an element of voyeurism as well. Okay.

Yeah. Yeah, what does the word mean, voyeurism?

Looking in on... Explain it for somebody looking in from the outside. Well, 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.

[33 : 03] 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 Christians believe there will be heaven after they died. after he died. I think that's best happiness as Christian.

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. What do you think about that? About that? I think you answered your own question in quite a precise way.

I suppose that the experience that is available to somebody who starts to experience this shalom peace of God that we're 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.

[34 : 32] 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're 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. Are there any other reflections or comments or questions?

Yeah, please. It's just a word I mentioned earlier, this word contentment. 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, I've learned 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.

[36 : 19] But again, it's the use of language, isn't it? People can use that word to mean something that, well, 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.

It 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.

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.

[37 : 44] 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. 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 are one reason or another 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.

[38 : 48] It's not an English concept, is it? The Germans talk about Heimat, which is closer, I think. 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, I don't, 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'll give you peace, peace of mind, as you said. I don't think you ever said it was going to make you happy. Yeah, perhaps the 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.

[40 : 05] 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, I mean, 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 Jesus.

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?

[41 : 42] Please. This isn't on that. I was just thinking in relation to C.S. Lewis' list of three longings.

Yes. From a Christian perspective could you look at them in relation to God? So, kind of being God making it kind of being at home with God and being a peace of mind with God and intimacy in a sense.

So, on or just C.S. Lewis' list of longings if you could look at longings in a general sense if from a Christian perspective as maybe another way to relate with God. I mean, I'm sure we can get really philosophical and say it's all about God but of course there is a material world out here we have to relate longings to as well.

But if you can double them up and also say these longings can be applied to a kind of spiritual sense and you can look at all these things longings for happiness I don't know peace, love, intimacy, closeness I don't know friendship you can all apply them to a way one might look at God. Do you think that that might inform the way that we relate with God? Yeah, well I mean I'm saying that these desires are all things related to the material world or just things that exist so people, friends, things we can see around us but you can want these things I mean, I know that's just a good way of maybe looking at something which you can't see with your own eyes something which you have to imagine.

[43 : 04] So I'm thinking maybe it's just a nice way of kind of thinking about God if you look at longings we have in the real world and the material world or whatever and then applying them to God. Lewis felt that Dante was the greatest poet that had 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 can begin to engage with God in a more human way a more tangible way a 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. 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 that's not quite the sort of peace that God offers 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 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 there was no pain, if there was no mourning, if there was no trouble ever, if we never experienced any lack of anything, then perhaps we would never realise that there had been something that went wrong with the world.

[45 : 36] 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's happened and something's 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 and 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 things, they can happier.

But when someone slander another people or stab on another people, also they can feel happier.

[46 : 53] Can we say that's happiness? 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, I'm okay, yeah. Please, yeah, okay. I want to ask one question for you, but maybe before I want to explain my opinion.

I think that maybe one person, it's different one person who have something to believe or something for wake up every morning for fighting the life that not have anything.

And I want to ask if you think that it's important, the difference because we are talking about the happiness and how can we catch or touch the happiness.

I want to ask if you think that it's better think in the happiness or not think in the happiness because it's true.

[48 : 22] It's difficult because you can think that if you think in the happiness and okay, how I can do it, but maybe if you think a lot, you don't have happiness.

and it's real difference in the people who not think only life and people who think and try to catch the happiness. Because it's always I have heard 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 bit.

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 now.

[49 : 33] 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 it 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 know reality? There's the story I remember that's told, it's a fictional story, about a guy called OneMug.

And OneMug is a student, let's say he's a student here at the University of Sussex. OneMug 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.

[50 : 48] OneMug 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, OneMug 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, OneMug, 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 OneMug'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 OneMug decides to stay on and do an M.A. and then a Ph.D. Eventually the campaign is continuing and OneMug has become a professor.

[52 : 03] 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 British government are flying him all over the world to consult on special problems in his field.

Time and Newsweek interview OneMug and they interview him and they're in on the scam too. Everybody is in on the scam. Everybody is telling OneMug he is brilliant but in reality he doesn't know anything that he's talking about.

He's talking dribble. OneMug 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 OneMug's head, the sort of thoughts that OneMug 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.

[53 : 19] He genuinely believes these things. The question is, would you choose OneMug'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 or perhaps you have children one day, would you choose to allow them, to put them into the system where they could be OneMug and live his life? What would you choose?

You. Because I understand that not all. Sorry. No, not all there. Okay. But this question about the children. Would you, yeah, would you choose to be OneMug?

One? OneMug, 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?

[54 : 39] Truth. Truth. Truth. For my child. And you. No, it's different. For me, the truth, of course. I think that my son has 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 OneMug'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. The Matrix is about that. I mean, the Matrix is about what seems to be a perfectly normal way of life.

The whole thing is the conception. 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?

[55 : 47] Can we have a claim to know reality? In OneMug's situation, his reality doesn't equal truth.

Yeah. Yes, yes. Thank you.

Really. These films. Sorry. I think it was me. I think I locked 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 want the truth. in the big court cases as well. We want the truth to come out. These are the heroes. Yes. Yes.

Thank you. Okay. One more question. We're finished with one more question. We're finished with one more question. Who did you ask?

[56 : 58] Okay. Thanks. Okay. We're finished 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, happiness, but they find that the truth is that they can't get happiness. So they're 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 live a sort of resigned to cynicism? Yeah, that's right.

That's a 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.

[58 : 10] 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 enjoyments but that's it.

I think expectations maybe are dropped now. What 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. I've really enjoyed it and it's been a pleasure to be here with you these last couple of days.

[59 : 25] Can we just say thank you to Tom for this excellent evening. Thank you very much. I said at the beginning this is a be thinking talk and I think it's fulfilled exactly that hasn't it's 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 the any questions tomorrow at six so it'd 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 night.

Thank you.