

THE TEST OF LIFE

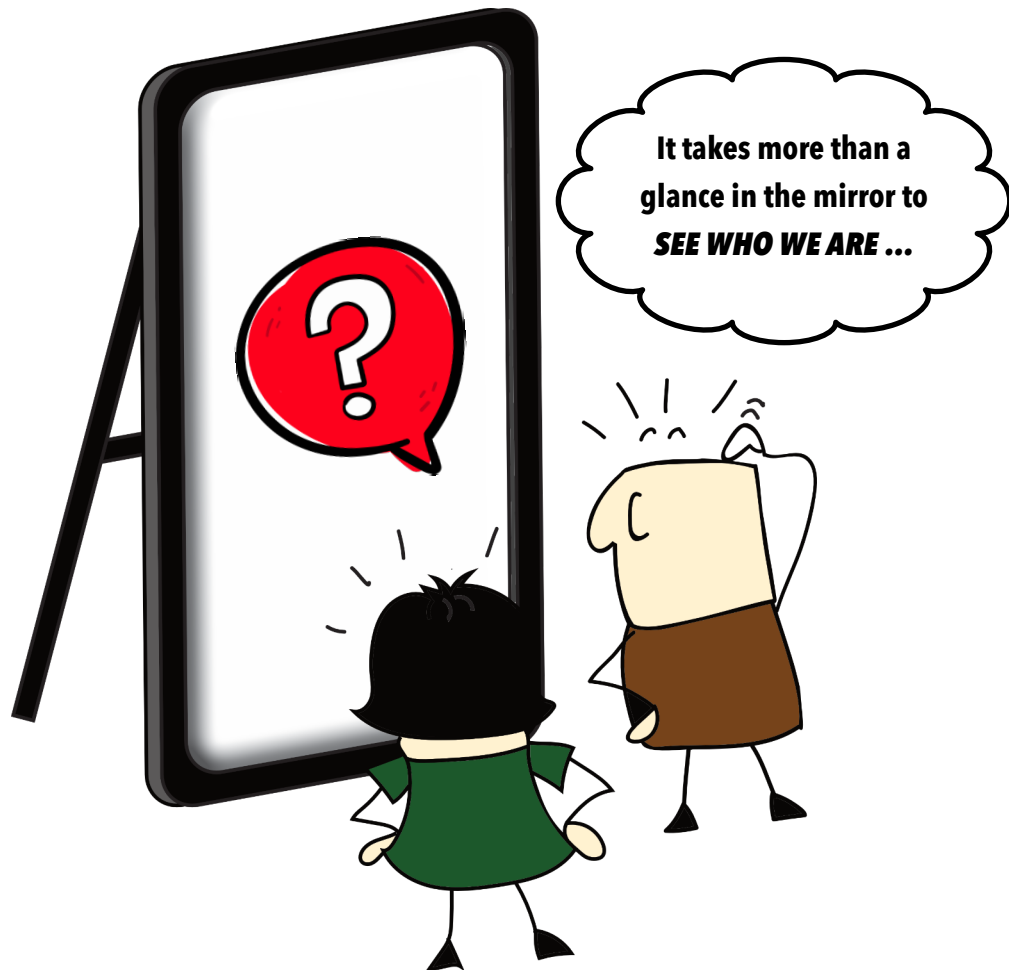
SEEING WHAT WE NEED TO SEE ...

POW

Our first need is not to teach God His business but to learn the truth about ourselves, a lesson we are very slow to accept.

–Derek Kidner–

BOOM!



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- *I* said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts (*Ecclesiastes 3:18 ESV*).
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"THE TEST OF LIFE"

- **PURPOSE:** THAT WE SEE WHAT WE NEED TO SEE—THAT WE SEE OURSELVES AS GOD SEES US.
- **GOAL:** THAT WE MIGHT EXPERIENCE TRUE LIFE.

God's sovereign purpose in this test of life "under the sun" is to ultimately drive us to discover during our time on earth what is truly meaningful and significant. He works his perfect plan through all our frustrations, futilities, disappointments and burdens of life with the deliberate and specific intent that we will run out of options ... and see that what he offers is the only viable solution to our predicament, i.e. abundant life in Jesus Christ ...

- (John 10:9–11a ESV) I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd.

1. WE NEED TO SEE THE PREEMINENT PLACE OF WICKEDNESS IN THIS WORLD, 3:16.

- (Ecclesiastes 3:16 ESV) Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness.
- (Psalm 82:1–5 ESV) God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: 2 "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?" Selah 3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. 4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." 5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
- (Isaiah 59:14–15 ESV) Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. 15 Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.
- (Matthew 26:59–60a ESV) Now the chief

priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, 60 but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward.

2. WE NEED TO SEE "IN OUR HEARTS" THE COMING JUDGMENT OF GOD, 3:17.

- (Ecclesiastes 3:17 ESV) I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.
- (Hebrews 9:27 ESV) And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.
- (Matthew 16:27 ESV) For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.
- (John 5:28–29 ESV) Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.
- (Romans 2:5–8 ESV) But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 He will render to each one according to his works: 7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.
- (2 Thessalonians 1:7b–9 ESV) When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

"THE TEST OF LIFE" INTRODUCED ...

3. WE NEED TO SEE "IN OUR HEARTS" THAT GOD IS TESTING US TO EXPOSE OUR LOWLY HUMAN CONDITION, 3:18-22.

- (Ecclesiastes 3:18–22 ESV) I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that

God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. 19 For

what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. 21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? 22 **So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot.** Who can bring him to see what will be after him?

- (Psalm 49:20 ESV) **Man in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish.**
- (Psalm 73:21–22 ESV) When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, 22 **I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.**
- (2 Peter 2:12–14 ESV) **But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction,** 13 suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!

EXCURSUS—“THE TEST OF LIFE” PARAMETERS ...

The parameters of this test are established so that we will be humbled and that we will see who we are without God in our lives—that we are but beasts.

God establishes the parameters of his test to life “under the sun” to intentionally frustrate us by confining us—*restricting and limiting us*—with the meaninglessness, monotony, injustice and evil of life apart from divine intervention or interruption.

I. He intentionally, sovereignly, providentially keeps us in the dark ...

- (Ecclesiastes 3:11 ESV) He has made

everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, **yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.**

II. He intentionally, sovereignly, providentially rules over our lives to cause us to fear him ...

- (Ecclesiastes 3:14 NLT) And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. **God’s purpose is that people should fear him.**

III. He sovereignly, providentially works all things for the good of those who love him ...

- (Romans 8:27–28 ESV) And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because **the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.** 28 And **we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,** for those who are called according to his purpose.

IV. God’s “good working” produces two powerful assurances within those who love God ...

- A. **THE ASSURANCE OF KNOWING that the Spirit is praying for us in perfect accord with the mind and the will of God.**
- B. **THE ASSURANCE OF KNOWING that all things ultimately will work together for our good.**

END EXCURSUS

3. CONTINUED ... WE NEED TO SEE “IN OUR HEARTS” THAT GOD IS TESTING US TO EXPOSE WHO WE ARE—OUR LOWLY HUMAN CONDITION, 3:18-22.

The parameters establish the harsh reality of life “under the sun” so the weight of this world is brought to bear on our hearts and minds ...

- a. We are no different than animals, 3:18.
- b. Humans die and animals die, 3:19.
- c. Humans and animals breathe the same air, 3:19.
- d. Humans and animals all return to the ground, 3:20.
- e. There is no definitive voice as to the spirit of humans going up and the spirit of animals going down, 3:21.
- f. Since humans are no better than animals there is nothing better than for a man or woman to enjoy

their work, 3:22a.

- g. There is no voice of insight as to what comes after, 3:22b.

"THE TEST OF LIFE" RESULTS ...

CONCLUSION: WE NEED TO STAY IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR

We need to remain in front of the mirror ... live in God's word ... to see ourselves as we are ... *so that* we will accept God's deliverance from ourselves and from this world.

- I. We need to daily live before a holy God or we will flounder in meaninglessness and our time on earth will profit us no more than that of a beast of the field.

- (Psalm 49:20 ESV) Man in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish.

- II. We need a substantial, consistent, enduring, deep relationship with God through the word of God.

THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING ... our relationship with God is reflected in our relationship with the word of God. *AND KNOW THIS* ... It takes more than a glance in the mirror to see ourselves clearly ...

- A. TO SEE OURSELVES AS WE ARE** we must humbly receive the word of God, James 1:19-21.

- (James 1:19-21 NLT) **Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters:** You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. 20 Human anger does not

produce the righteousness God desires. 21 So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.

- B. TO SEE OURSELVES AS WE ARE** we must endure in obedience to the word of God, James 1:22-25.

- (James 1:22-25 ESV) But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, **deceiving yourselves**. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 **But the one who looks into the perfect law**, the law of liberty, **and perseveres**, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, **he will be blessed in his doing**.

- C. TO SEE OURSELVES AS WE ARE** we must not deceive our own hearts, 1:26.

- (James 1:26 ESV) If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue **but deceives his heart**, this person's religion is worthless.

- D. TO SEE OURSELVES AS WE ARE** we must keep ourselves from the corruption of this world, 1:27.

- (James 1:27 ESV) Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

- (James 1:25 NLT)

