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A God-Shaped Hole

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Some theologians and social scientists refer to humans having a “God-shaped hole” in their lives. They recognize that humans have a psychological or spiritual need that only belief in a supreme being can fill. Unbelievers explain this phenomenon as ancestral residue, the remnant of ancient beliefs spawned in ignorance of the world around us. Even though they say man has intellectually outgrown God, there remains a lingering, cross-cultural psychological niche that can be filled only by believing in a higher power.

Believers, however, view this God-shaped hole differently. It is not a vestige from our formative development as a species but a built-in feature. It is “original equipment” supplied by our supreme, divine Creator who created us for the ultimate purpose of discovering Him. He desires the closest fellowship with us and desires to transform us into His likeness. And when we reject this purpose and become estranged from Him in our sins, we will vainly try to fill that hole with other things.

In a recent documentary on the death of pop star George Michael, the singer indirectly referred to this God-shaped hole. In a far ranging interview on his stardom, openly gay lifestyle, drug abuse, the death of his mother, hatred of the tabloids and paparazzi and run-ins with the law, Michael noted that his fame, fortune and sexual adventurism did not fill in what was missing in his life like he thought they would. It was the candid admission of a man stating an obvious spiritual truth but who was totally unaware of what he was describing. None of his earthly attainments and pleasures – his 35-year career in music, 100+ million records sold, captivating good looks, drug-induced euphoria, \$150 million estate,

indiscriminate homosexual carousing, not even his generous clandestine philanthropy – could fill George Michael’s God-shaped hole. He died alone in his English country estate on Christmas morning, 2016, of heart and liver failure. He was 53.

There is no secret here. Solomon, writing 3,000 years ago, said, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil”* (Ecc 12:13-14).

Note that this is the “conclusion” of what he had previously reasoned out in the book. He had already dealt with essence of earthly life and what was vain, futile and meaningless. Solomon’s words, because they originate with the Creator, are timeless. Here are three highlights:

1. *“That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun”* – 1:9. There is a commonness to human experience and achievement, but because we are still developing and the particulars of our existence are new to us, we think we are unique. We are not. The things that motivate, challenge, tempt and ruin former generations will do the same to us. George Michael’s story is sadly repeated over and over again. Wisdom understands this truth and acts accordingly.
2. *“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun”* – 2:11. Work has its place – to provide the necessities of life; to care for family, friends and others in need; to be productive and purposeful; to occupy our mind and time with noble endeavors – but hoping to earn standing in the annals of history is fruitless. George Michael tried to dismiss his homosexual escapades as unimportant rubbish but he boldly declared, “my music will go on.” He was wrong. For all his accolades and awards, his music will slowly fade, replaced by the next big thing. That’s just the way life is.
3. *“For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart, with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work grievous; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity”* – 2:23. Those lacking success and

wealth by the world's standards think that having them would make life carefree. But material things, as Jesus later notes, become rusty, moth-eaten and/or stolen. A great amount of mental energy must be expended in order to maintain one's paltry accumulations. Alas, death comes and it is left to those who didn't work for it and thus don't value it (Ecc 2:18-21). George Michael admitted that after all his early hits and mega-fame, he couldn't relax. He felt guilty taking time off. Many others depended on him for their income; the fans wanted another album, another concert, another appearance. And in spite of his bravado about his music, he knew he could easily be replaced if he didn't remain significant to the fickle public.

At the outset of his career, George Michael was half of a duo called *Wham!* The other half was Andrew Ridgeley. After George left for a solo career, Ridgeley faded into comparative obscurity. But later in life, it was George Michael who told Andrew Ridgeley that he envied the life that Ridgeley had rather than the other way around. George Michael, the most played artist on British radio during the era of 1984-2000, had tasted success but it wasn't all that sweet.

2020 is drawing to a close with all of its global challenges: a continuing pandemic; economic instability; a political regime change; the strengthening of global adversaries; increasing polarization of "identity politics" and godless, leftist ideology. In all this maelstrom the most important question of all is: *Do you have a God-shaped hole in your life that you cannot seem to fill?* That is a hard question to answer honestly, for Satan persuades us to rationalize away a true answer. Because if we properly diagnose what we are feeling, then we are more likely to turn to God and find that which truly satisfies the deepest longings of the human heart.

The Centreville Journal

Challenges for the New Year

- by Greg Gwin

The beginning of a new year provides an excellent opportunity for us to pause, ponder, plan, and prepare for the future. We hope that the new year will especially cause us all to think about our spiritual service to God and how we can improve in the fulfillment of our duties to Him. Let us challenge you in these specific areas:

- 1 - Spend more time in prayer. Don't allow the day to begin or end without spending time in prayer to God. Throughout the day, stop and petition Him for help and strength. And, by all means, don't just wait for a crisis to develop before you think to pray. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- 2 - Study your Bible more consistently. Use one of the available daily Bible reading schedules, or come up with your own plan to read on a regular basis. Don't just rush through a few verses. Instead, really study the text to learn its meaning. Before you end a reading session, think about how you can make application of what you've read in a real and practical way. "Give attendance to reading . . ." (1 Timothy 4:13).
- 3 - Attend every Bible study and worship in this new year. This, of course, is your duty -- but it is also a privilege. BE HERE! Make this a high priority. Why would you not want to be present to worship God and study His Word? "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . ." (Hebrews 10:25).
- 4 - Teach the lost. We all have friends, neighbors, co-workers and family members who are lost in sin. They NEED us to share the gospel with them. Make a firm commitment to reach at least one of them with the "good news" this year. If each Christian would bring just one person to the Lord each year, we could soon convert the whole world. Let's do it! "Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19).
- 5 - Live a pure, godly life. Nothing else matters if we are not living faithfully for the Lord. Think about this, and let it be manifested in how you talk, where you go, who you associate with, how you dress, etc. Others are looking to you, and evaluating Christianity on the basis of what they see of it in you. "Ye are the light of the world . . . let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

In a very real sense, having a "Happy New Year" depends on how well you fulfill your spiritual duties to God. Think!

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