

The Way – Existential Desires

John 7:37,38

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

Definition: Existential – refers to the experience of existence. It actually is used to express something more than this. It is a word reflecting human beings consciousness of their being and our understanding of everything in association with ourselves. We know that we think a thought, we have a view, we hold ourselves in relationship to all around us and so in a sense we put ourselves at the center of the universe. For we are at the center of our awareness of the universe. I know nothing apart from knowing it with in a consciousness of myself. This is existential. It is our experience of existence.

Introduction: There are any number of ways the Christian apologist may go about proving the existence of God and then also go on to prove the gospel accounts of Christ. They may start with **the ontological argument** that argues the existence of God because God is conceivable and that you cannot conceive of a thing that has no basis in reality. They may argue with **the cosmological argument** which argues for a first cause of those things which exist; an uncaused cause. The argument is quite simple. **1st** whatever exists has a cause. **2nd** the universe began to exist. **3rd** therefore the universe has a cause to its existence. This cause would have to be uncaused, eternal, changeless, timeless, and immaterial and personal. This is God. They may also offer **the teleological argument**, which argues that the order of the universe requires a intelligent designer. You find a watch on the moon and you would discern that someone left it there. That watch shows purposeful adaptation of means to accomplish some end... That is design and the universe is all about design. There is **the moral argument** which says that there is no way to conceptualize moral good apart from an absolute moral law giver. **Plato** made such an argument; he suggested that there was an absolute unchangeable good which everything that has goodness was patterned after.

From these arguments the Christian apologist must go on to prove the God of the Bible. Therefore they have to deal with such things as miracles and prove that they are not unreasonable. **The arguments are simple.** Given the existence of God, miracles are possible. God is all powerful, God is overseeing the affairs of his creation, God is free to act in that creation as He wills and he does through natural laws he has established and through altering those in the miraculous to suit his desires. Beyond this there are the historical facts of the miraculous.

This raises another challenge to the apologist. Now they have to demonstrate the reliability of the biblical accounts of the Bible. You may be surprised but it is just here that the arguments become the most convincing. The arguments pile up around the reliability of the historical sources reflecting an eye witness account and go from there. This then brings us to the factual evidence for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and again the evidence is quite overwhelming.¹

¹ Apologetics, William Lane Craig

And yet once all these arguments are made and you have engaged the mind you will find that no one has ever become a Christian merely by the presentation of these arguments alone. Another way of putting it is that no one becomes a Christian by losing an argument. This is something that I say every time I go and teach people how to share their faith in Jesus Christ. *“A person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.” “If a person loses an argument and usually he will go out and attempt to strengthen his old position.”* This week I was reminded of my statement by reading the opening line in an article on apologetics. The author said, *“In all my years as a Christian I have only met one person who was argued into the faith.”* That is one more person than I have met. Logical arguments serve their purpose to lower and even remove certain barriers to faith that an individual might have but once the barrier is removed it will take something more than logic and empirical evidence to move that person forward towards faith in Christ.

It will take THIRST and something that can SATISFY that thirst.

And a thirst is what all people have and the Lord Jesus claims that what He has is the ability to satisfy that thirst in Himself.

I. Here is Existential Desire - “If anyone thirst...”

The statement is an understatement. It is an unnecessary hypothetical. The Apostle John used the same construction when he says in **1 John 2:1**, *“I write to you little children that you sin not, if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”*

If anyone sins? It is a kind way of referring to the inevitable. He could have said just a correctly. *When anyone sins.* Now Jesus says, *If anyone thirst...* He might have well of said, *“All Thirst...”* for all do.

We have said that the when we say ‘*existential*’ we are referring to an individual’s consciousness of existence... we are referring to our self awareness and an awareness that we conceptualize everything in relation to ourselves... relating to everything from ourselves. This is found in the human creature like nothing else in creation.

Only the human being is found relating himself or herself to the stars and the sun and moon and the seas. Only we are found relating ourselves to the past and to the future... We follow the evidence (empirical and logical), strewn throughout nature, to the throne of an uncaused cause that is all powerful, personal, eternal, timeless, unchanging and immaterial. And then we must decide how we will relate ourselves to this astounding being... or whether we shall admit to ourselves that this creator exist at all. This very capacity rising out of self awareness seems to substantiate the Bible’s claim that we are made in the image of God. **WE relate ourselves to everything because God made us with this capacity so that we may relate ourselves to HIM.**

As we relate to the universe there are certain desires or longings that rise up in our lives. These are desires reflecting this existential reality of self conscious existence relating to everything around us. They are unique to ourselves and they are undeniable. We all have these desires, these emotions, these longings, this thirst.

1st We thirst for what is good. We want things to be right.

2nd We thirst for moral fitness. We want to be in the right.

3rd We thirst for justice. We want the universe to be right with us.

4th We thirst for transcendent love. We know that nothing is right without it.

These desires echo in the heart of every person. They cannot deny this reality anymore than they can deny themselves or relate themselves to anything else. It is existential. What is odd is that often individuals will build their arguments around the empirical evidence and forget that these very desires are the issues that are stirring the debate... that have stirred them up to pursue any kind of understanding at all. It is a pursuit to satisfy these very longings; to be right with their world.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 explains how these desires rise. They actually are stirred up with us by God's own Spirit. There it says that God has set, "*eternity in our hearts.*" **John 16:8-11** once again explains how the Spirit stirs these desires up within us. There it says that the Spirit works to *convict us of sin and righteousness and judgment.* In other words... **The Spirit of God both authors these desires and then underscores, in conviction, our failures to gain them.**

- We know things are not all right.
- We know we are not in the right.
- We know that justice eludes us and that justice sets itself against us.
- We know that transcendent love is possible but we are not secure in finding it.

And so we thirst... And our failure to realize these things only adds to our thirst, additional ones, for now we long for **reconciliation** with this love, we long for **forgiveness** from failing in the right, we long for **redemption** from our failures... **We thirst...** Jesus knew the existential longings and thirst of people.

The seven day feast of Tabernacles... had under Jewish custom been stretched to eight days. The feast celebrated the wandering of the people in the wilderness after their rescue from bondage in Egypt. During the wandering you may remember that God had provided water for the people of Israel. To commemorate the manner in which God satisfied their thirsts at that time, during the festival, water would be drawn each day and brought in a parade from the pool of Siloam, through the Water Gate and to the altar in the Temple. Then as the people chanted out the word of **Isaiah 12:3**, "*With joy shall we draw from the wells of our salvation.*" The water was poured out upon the altar as an offering to God.²

Yet after seven days, of repeating this ceremony, the Lord Jesus knew the existential thirst for that water, from the wells of salvation, had not been met. On the eighth day the people concluded their festival, no more water was brought from the pool of Siloam but Christ stood up to proclaim that He was the water of life. *Come unto me you who are thirsting... I satisfy those desires that you know you have.*

II. Jesus satisfies our existential longings. He is the eternal one who answers the ache in our hearts for the eternal. He is transcendent love in the flesh and He meets what you really need.

The Bible teaches that people are sinful. People have fallen away from God's desire for them and so they have fallen away from God. And God's Spirit will not let them forget this. This is the reason for your angst... the reason for your thirst... for your desires going unmet. These desires are to be met by your relationship to God alone. But your sins separate you from Him.

² The Gospel of John Vol. 1 William Barclay

Not only are we separated from God in our sins, but our sins have infected us with an antagonism towards God. The Bible actually says that we are running from God and that in our sins we are not, in reality, seeking Him. And yet, even as we run from God, we still pursue the satisfaction of these desires... **for what is good, for moral fitness, for justice, and for transcendent love...** but now we pursue them by creating new faiths, that are made up of a strange mixture of elements reflecting the sinner's flight from God, and at the same time, the Spirit's witness of the truth of God in our lives. **It is a mixture that may taste sweet in the mouth but ultimately, is bitter in the belly.** Ex. Of over hearing two woman in a shop dedicated to spirituality... There was the works of Nietzsche the muse of Hitler. Nietzsche said that Christianity was, "*the one great curse, the one enormous and innermost perversion...the one immortal blemish on mankind.*" Because its ideas of virtue were to be despised. This man taught that virtue should never be regarded as anything but the means to strength and power and order. He championed the idea of a superman who personified the cruel, ruthless and unbridled power... '*the magnificent blond brute, avidly rampant for spoil and victory.*' Well that book was there in the middle of all the crystals and incense sticks. While there I overheard the owner of the shop talking with another customer. "*Have you been to the north end ashram. It is such a wonderful place for meditation. They mix the meditations of Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism... its incredible.*" I thought, "*What is incredible is that you can mix Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism.*"

These existential desires of ours are dragged, by the sinful nature, into idolatry. WE will bow down at some altar, before some god, all of us and relate ourselves towards it in an effort to satisfy those desires. **These same desires are drawn up, by the Spirit, to lead people to Christ.** God wants to take your thirst and use that thirst in order to lead you to the one person who can meet it, bring you to the true destination of these existential desires.

King David said reflected on the deer that was fatigued in the hunt. It was being run to the ground, gasping for air and panting for water. In **Psalm 42:1** David said that he desired God like a deer pants for water. Listen, **like the deer panting for the water, everyone is panting for God. However, everyone does not know that it is God that they are panting for.**

What Christ is promising to all that will hear, is to meet in himself all that is at the core of their existential longings. **He will satisfy the desire created by our self conscious awareness of our relationship to all things. It is a desire to be right in those relationships, and Jesus satisfies that desire by making us right with Himself, by making us right with our Creator. At the core of the desire for the good and for moral fitness and for justice and for transcendent love is a desire for relationship.** Now, Christ offers you the forgiveness, and meaning and significance and fulfilled purpose by bringing you to fountain at which these deepest desires are met... by bringing you into relationship with your Creator. **Your very nature is a reflection of God... you are the way you are because you were made for Him** and you cannot be reconciled to all that you are until you are reconciled to Him.

Once we come to Christ these desires do not disappear. They remain as impulses stirred by Spirit of God, drawing us deeper and deeper into our walk with the Lord Jesus. As they do, these existential desires are directed into Christ's demands for His disciples. "*You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and mind ... You are to love your neighbor as yourself.*" **Luke 10:27**

This may surprise you. There is a lot of unsettled longings in the world today and maybe in your life. Jesus gave a simple remedy and answer for those longings. “*Just come to me.*” *Come to me and drink... By Drink* Christ is saying... *take from me everything that your soul really wants, you want forgiveness, freedom, grace, peace, strength, patience, hope, a sense of eternal worth... I am the answer for that. I am the fountain of life. Use me just for that.*

The prophet Jeremiah said that the people of Israel had committed the sin of fashioning for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that held no water. Here is where the water is. Drink of Him.

III. Jesus not only meets your existential desires but he meets them so fully that in satisfying you he is able to overflow your life to bring satisfaction to others.

...come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me—From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. In **John 4:14** the Lord said something similar to the Samaritan women. He told her he would give her water to drink that would be, “*in her a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*” A surging gurgling spring of refreshing life.

The meaning of this promise of Jesus is that everyone who truly believes in Him and comes to satisfy their great thirst by Him shall receive such an abundant satisfaction of their spiritual wants that it will not only satisfy them but it will breach the banks of their lives and flood into the lives of others. When you drink of Jesus fullness your life becomes an instrument through which His word, His work, His life giving water of blessing will flow forth to the everlasting benefit of your fellow men.³ You shall have enough for yourself. You shall be a blessing to others.

This coming into the way... coming to the fullness of Christ is not just for us... our world needs what would flow from us... if we would come and find our all in the Lord Jesus.

Application:

1. Be careful that you are not trying to satisfy those existential desires in something or someone else. It won't work...
2. In all our intellectual, and logical considerations of what is true or attempts to present the truth to others... remember this truth about them. They have a desire that God shaped in them and only God can meet. It is a desire Christ has come to fill.
3. If you are to come and drink of Christ to satisfy your desires you will have to come see that He is the thing that you really desire. In other words you'll have to abandon those other wells; those other things that you have hoped will satisfy you. You will have to leave them behind you and come to Christ without them. Another word for this is, absolute surrender... leaving behind the one for this other...

³ Expository Thoughts on The Gospels, John vol. 2. J.C. Ryle