

THE SEARCH FOR TERRESTRIAL LIFE

If we ever discover extra-terrestrial beings, man, will we ever get an earful? “Why are you searching for us?” they’ll say. “Most of you have never even discovered any meaning in your search for terrestrial life!” Would those little green men be right? Let’s check it out on today’s “More Than Talk”.

INTRODUCTION

Science always speaks of its search for extraterrestrial life. Millions of dollars are spent on technology to “listen in” for sounds from outer space – or to hopefully see signs compatible with life on other planets. Yet here on planet earth, people everywhere look for meaning to life and few find it. I call it the search for terrestrial life.

I’m Frank Eiklor. Come with me for the next half hour and we’ll hear from people who sought for meaning and fulfillment in life – but looked in the wrong places. Some thought they had it all. Others were ready to do anything in order to get it all. But why should I tell their stories? Let them speak for themselves.

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(The Man Who Had It All)

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We now begin a short series of five studies of people who sought for meaning and fulfillment in life but looked in the wrong places. Like the one man who really did have it all. But “all” couldn’t satisfy. Poor King Solomon. Let’s let him be our teacher and learn what he has to say about life.

“My name is Solomon. That’s ‘King’ Solomon. I’m known as the wisest king that ever lived. Maybe so. But if you knew the misery in my soul during my final years on earth, you would feel sorry for me. You see, my wisdom turned to utter stupidity. I became a rebel to the kindest person in the universe—my Creator. That’s how I really became ‘foolish King Solomon’.

“Things started out great. My father, David, and mother, Bathsheba, loved me. I was destined for the throne, and that’s where God put me. Oh, if only I guarded the Lord as my first love, as He was in those early years. He came to me in a dream and told me to ‘Ask what I shall give you’. All I wanted was more of Him, so I asked for an understanding mind and a hearing heart so that I would always discern between good and evil in my life and the lives of my people.

“My prayer pleased Him, and from then on it seemed like the very mind of God overpowered my brain. Decisions became easy, and they were always right. The world’s greatest intellectuals came to test me (maybe even to trap me). But how can you out think God? And since He was in control, their ‘hard questions’ were like kindergarten stuff. And I always remembered to give my Creator all the glory.

“Oh, if I only had kept my priorities straight. I was supposed to be God’s servant to all, but I began wanting to be served by all. I knew true power and riches came from my intimacy with Him. But my deceitful heart pushed God aside and I lusted for what the world had to offer—the prestige of houses and chariots and the glitter of gold. Oh, and then there were all those beautiful women. I didn’t choose one. Oh no, I had to have 700 wives and 300 other women reserved only for me! That’s 1,000 women! Why just to spend one night with each one would take three years!

What an idiot I was! Every warning God ever gave me I just threw back in His face. So I had it all. You can read my own words in Ecclesiastes chapter 2. In fact, let me warn you to pay attention to my words, like God tried to warn me (but I was too foolish to obey). I had all the houses, vineyards, gardens and orchards that I wanted. I snapped my fingers and servants came running. Gold and silver? You would get exhausted even trying to count it. Fact is, look at that verse 10 closely; ‘whatever my eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any pleasure’. How is that for ‘having it all’?

“But in running after it all, I left the only One worth it all. I gained the gold and lost my love for God. While the world applauded ‘wise and rich King Solomon’, the reality was God, angels and saints in the heavenly realm were feeling sadness and pity for ‘poor, stupid King Solomon’. I was not exaggerating when I told you ‘I hated life’ and ‘I hated all my labor’, and called it all ‘vanity’—the emptiness, falsity and futility of chasing the wind.

“And in the end? I tried to kill an innocent man, Jeroboam, like Saul had tried to murder my father. And all those women I embraced talked me into embracing their false and fictitious gods. I even built temples for those lifeless gods of wood and stone. Me! Solomon! The man the awesome almighty God chose to build His temple! And I ended up constructing temples for demons!

“I failed the only One worth pleasing—God. I failed as an example to others. But at least God has allowed me to leave you warnings (to resist evil) and promises (of His help and strength as you trust in the Lord with all your heart). Just don’t blow it by leaning on your own understanding. Make the Lord—keep the Lord—your greatest priority and He will direct your paths.

“Did I, Solomon, repent of all my foolish and sinful choices before I died? That is not for you to know at this time. Just learn from three volumes I left you—Proverbs for real wisdom, Ecclesiastes for lasting priorities and my Song of Solomon for maintaining your first love for Him alone. Then you won’t end up like me, having it all but hating it all. Because when you have the Lord, you have all that really matters!”

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(The Rich Fool)

“You poor foolish people on earth. When will you learn? But I guess that’s the eternal dilemma. Men never learn from history, so they repeat the same stupid sins and mistakes. I know. I was one of them.

“It’s too late for me. I’m like that other rich man Jesus spoke about who died and woke up in hell. Let me tell you my story. But first, let me warn you not to ignore me. If you do, you may be telling the same horror story of regret after your death.

“People were pretty much the same in my day as they are in yours. Great minds were studying the heavens in their search for celestial life. Ahh, but they—and I— never did discover the meaning of terrestrial life. You know, what really counts in our short life on planet earth.

“Jesus spoke of me when His feet once walked where I walked. He used me as an example—a bad one. Open your Bible and look closely at Luke 12:15-21. It’s about me. Jesus talked about covetousness. Like it was an evil monster that killed its victims even while it smiled and offered us more

and more things, things, things. As usual, Jesus was right when He said, 'a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.'

"Then He brought me up: a certain rich man. My name is not important. If you want, you can call me 'Rich'. And the last name is 'Fool'. Anyway, I was a great farmer. I forgot that the soil was really His. So was the seed I planted. And the sun and the rain. Ingratitude was another monster that blinded and ruled me. I had so many fruits—cash crops—that I loaded all my barns. Then, because I thought I could never have enough for me, I dared to say something that made God say 'I have had enough of you!' Here's how it went. All my store houses were packed to overflowing. I told myself 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow all my fruits?' I wish I had made those words a prayer to God. All the good I could have done! Feeding the poor. Building hospitals. Supporting missionaries. Caring for orphans and widows.

"But no! I dared to answer my question this selfish way. 'I will pull down my barns and build greater... And I will say to my soul (not to another soul), Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry'. And that's when my Creator gave me thumbs down as a fool: 'You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you'.

"I died that very night. It's too late for me. But not for you. Catch God's warning in verse 21, 'So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God'. Take everything—everything—you have as a trust from the Almighty. Breath. Strength. Ability. Advantages. Riches. Then don't ask yourself like I did, 'What shall I do?' Ask God, 'What shall I do?' and listen for His answer. Only then will you avoid having the same last name as me —'Fool'."

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(The Church That Had Everything...Except Christ)

"If you don't believe in the grace of God, you will when I finish with you. Of course, everyone who believes in God has heard of His amazing grace that has reached the most wretched of sinners. After all, Jesus spent three years calling out to the poor, the blind, the demon possessed and all the other 'nobodies'. He even won over a few folks who were called rich and famous. But remember what He did to those religious pretenders? No wonder they wanted to kill Him! How would you feel about being exposed as a 'hypocrite', 'blind guide', 'white-washed grave', 'serpent and viper' and other names like that—right in front of your friends?!

“Well, my friends and I knew He was right and we cheered Him on. In fact, we decided to be identified with Jesus’ cause. We took on the name ‘Christian’ and even organized ourselves into a church—“First Church of the Lukewarm’ is what we called it. We grew so fast that we spread all over our city of Laodicea. There was no church or denomination that could equal us. What a message we had! ‘No pain all gain’. ‘Health and wealth spell godliness’. ‘A good self-image is better than an awareness of sin’. ‘Religious extremism is a voice to be rejected’. ‘Lukewarm is the perfect temperature of virtue’. We heard and believed a thousand other sermons like that.

“Then one day it happened. We were all having a lukewarm time in our lukewarm church feeling so lukewarm happy that we were not like those other churches we considered not very spiritual—you know, too hot or too cold. Then that knock came, first soft, then louder and very persistent. A few of us went to the door and opened it. We were stunned! Speechless! Terrified, really. It was Jesus, and the look on His face seemed to say, ‘This is your last chance. You had better not blow it!’ Jesus! On the outside of our church wanting to come in!

“You can read the whole story in the final book in Scripture—Revelation 3:14-22. Do you know what He said? The opposite of all that we were taught. Jesus would rather have us hot in our love for Him—or cold so that at least we would not be comfortable in our sin. Then He took our most cherished word—lukewarm—and said He planned to vomit us out of His mouth. Spit us out! Imagine our shock!

“But He was just getting started. Though we had kept Him outside our church, Jesus knew every sermon we preached and read our thoughts like they were an open book. ‘You say three things’, He said, ‘I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. That’s what you think. I, your Lord, have five things to say to you—that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked’.

“When He said that, the few of us who were listening (most had gone back in and closed the door on Jesus and us) felt love and not rejection. Talk about God’s grace! It even extended to us—the lukewarm and religious hypocrites. He told us what real gold is—the spiritual kind that gets into His Word and obeys it no matter the cost of suffering. And the white clothing of His righteousness; and eye salve that would fix our spiritual eyes on Him and the Word of God as our roadmap.

“Though we felt terrible for our sins, Jesus encouraged us with ‘As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent’. Then wow, grace of all grace—He told us that He was knocking at the door of each of our hearts. All any of us had to do was repent of our sins, open the door and invite Him in. A new life would begin. Incredible!

“Then He ended that holy conversation with a promise that never leaves me day or night. Though I had once been overcome with my miserable Luke warmness, Jesus declared that if I would walk with Him day by day, we would overcome the world with its temptations and He would let me sit with Him on His throne. I know that sounds wild—me, sitting with Him?! On His throne?! But He said it, and I am determined to be faithful.

“Now, isn’t my story a miracle of God’s grace?! Isn’t Jesus the Messiah incredible? My search for ‘terrestrial life’ is over. I have found the meaning of my time on earth is satisfied in Christ. You’ll discover the same thing if you turn away from the lukewarm and let Him give you a burning heart. Trust me. You’ll never be sorry!”

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(The “Bread” Lover)

“I’ll keep my name anonymous. But let me tell you my story. You’ve heard the term young people use for money. ‘I need some more bread!’ ‘Can you loan me some bread?’ ‘This will cost you some bread?’ So let me tell you about me—and some of my ‘successful’ friends who know a lot about ‘bread.’ In fact, we fell in love with money. At least I did. I mean I loved money the same way somebody says ‘I love my wife,’ or ‘I love God’.

“Talk about lusting for bread (money). I didn’t want a loaf or two—I wanted the entire bakery. But I didn’t know where my god would lead me. And I sure never knew how my choice to love money would leave me broken, miserable and empty at the end of my road. I just figured my search for terrestrial life—you know, happiness and fulfillment on this planet—would be satisfied with wealth and all it could buy.

“My other ‘bread lover’ friends and I used to shake our heads in sorrow over people punishing themselves. Like the man cutting himself in order to appease his god. Or others torturing themselves or others in the name of some deity—or blowing themselves up in order to go to some martyr’s heaven and send unbelievers to hell. Little did I know that I was also killing myself in a more subtle way while the devil drove me, and my friends applauded, my ‘determination’ and ‘single-mindedness’ to get my piece of the pie, or, shall I say, my loaf of bread.

“So give a listen to my story and keep your priorities straight. Paul had it right. I mean, he got it from Jesus, so you know it has to be right. Look closely at I Timothy 6:3-11. Come on—I’ll take the journey with you. These are warnings I didn’t know (I probably would have ignored them anyway). But if you listen and learn, you won’t cause yourself the agonies that I lived and died with.

“First, pay attention to wholesome words (verse three) and those are found in Scripture. Remember that Trump, Gates and Buffett don’t have the recipe for a life that counts forever. Jesus does! Next, beware of any who preach or teach that ‘gain is godliness’. Rich guys are all godly? Poor folks are all ungodly? What baloney! It’s usually the opposite.

“Now check out verse 6: ‘godliness with contentment is great gain’. That just means that the more of God you have in your life and the more you do what pleases Him, the richer you are. And what God says in verse 7 ought to make you shout it, and never doubt it: ‘For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out’. You know the old saying: ‘No U Haul truck follows a hearse’ or ‘No dead man ever came back to check his portfolio’.

“In verse 8 you can see that contentment comes from having enough bread, but not choking on it. Because here we cut right to the heart of the matter in verse 9: ‘But they that will be rich (that means to set your heart on being wealthy, not on knowing Christ) fall into temptation and a snare (the devil’s trap), and into many foolish and hurtful lusts (senseless cravings—harmful ambitions), which drown men in destruction and perdition.’

You see, the problem is not needing more money or even wanting more money. After all, it takes money to pay for that house you live in or to buy food, clothing and the works. No, the problem is 'For the love of money is the root of all evil'. Using money wisely is the root of much good. I was the guy who made money my first love. I craved it. Lusted for it. And the crazy thing is you don't even have to be rich to be destroyed by just the desire to be rich. Like the Good Book says, 'which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith (turned away from God), and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (caused themselves untold agonies of mind).

"Let me tell you of my personal miseries even as my net worth appeared to be soaring.

- 1) Even when I tried to sleep, I couldn't because of investment overload.
- 2) Whenever I lost a lot of money, I found myself popping more Advil or Roloids just to calm my poor stomach.
- 3) I started to envy and become jealous of those who did better than I did. I even hated a few of them. That brought on my colitis and ulcer.
- 4) Time with my wife and kids in prayer and the Bible? Are you kidding? Even when I thought about it, another 'emergency' would call me back to my bread line. I hardly noticed my wife's loneliness or my kids becoming distant. 'After all,' I told myself, 'I work all the time to give them all they need.'
- 5) I never was faithful to my church or to serving other believers. Okay, once in a while I gave them a nice check to remind them that gain made me godly.
- 6) When my son got in trouble with the law, he stood in court for his sentencing. I was so humiliated that I shouted: 'How could you do such a thing? I gave you everything!' Do you know what he shouted back with hatred in his eyes: 'You gave me everything, but you never gave me you!'

"Well, I could go on—but those six miseries are enough to leave you a warning to go after the only six joys that will last. Here they are in verse 11 'But thou, O man of God, flee these things (run from all these evil things); and follow after RIGHTEOUSNESS, GODLINESS, FAITH, LOVE, PATIENCE, MEEKNESS! Make doing God's will your aim and His Spirit will cause you to hit the target. Make wealth and all that goes with it your aim, and it will finally blow up in your face. Remember, I warned you!"

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“I Almost Blew It!”

“They say confession is good for the soul. So let me make both a sad and a glad confession. The sad part is that I almost bought a lie. The glad part is how God opened my eyes before I made what would have been the most tragic decision in my life

“My name is Asaph. I thought I was serious about the Lord. I’m convinced I really loved Him. But I obviously did not spend enough time in His Word or I wouldn’t have been fooled so easily. So follow along in Psalm 73 and I’ll tell you a story that will help you not to blow it like I almost did

“I lived in Israel and knew how God is good to those who want clean and true hearts. Yet it seemed that those who loved Him most had to suffer so many trials and temptations. In fact, much of the time the road was rough, weary and filled with obstacles. I knew He promised to be with those of us who loved Him, but man, couldn’t God make life a little easier?!

“That’s when I almost slipped and bought the devil’s lie. I found myself envying some of my neighbors—the arrogant ones—who did some pretty wicked things. They just smiled at my struggle to earn an honest living and to be faithful to the Lord. And they prospered—big time! Even the thought of death didn’t frighten them, and they seemed to have few troubles that money could not cure. They walked in pride and satisfied their every appetite. In fact, they had more than I could even wish for.

“And oh the filth that came out of their mouths. Some even made fun of God and spoke against the very heavens. ‘How does God Know?’, they mocked, and acted like they were smarter than the Almighty, with insults like ‘Is there knowledge in the Most High?’

“I admit I had my own doubts about God. Why didn’t he close their mouths? You know, just kill them! Yet they went on prospering, living in incredible ease and piling up their riches. That’s when I lost control of my feelings and let dangerous thoughts come into my mind. ‘Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart’, I thought. ‘What has God really done for me in my honest search for His will and plan for my life on this earth? Sometimes it feels all I get are plagues and chastening.’

“Thank God, I didn’t let those terrible thoughts come out of my mouth or I would have failed those who were determined to love the Lord whatever the cost. But I admit when I tried to figure out why so many evil people seem so happy and fulfilled, it was too painful for me. Until! Let me say it again—UNTIL! I got alone with the true and living God. And there—in that secret place of His sanctuary—I understood the end of the road for the wicked. Talk about slippery places? God suddenly casts them down to destruction, brings them to eternal desolation and utterly consumes them with terrors.

“When God’s Spirit opened my eyes, I felt so ashamed. I cried out to my heavenly Father, ‘So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before you.’ But instead of feeling His anger, I only felt his love. And that’s when I told the Lord how I wanted to live the rest of my days: ‘Nevertheless I am continually with you; you do hold my right hand. You will guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth I desire beside You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.’ (Psalms 73:23-26)

“So there you have it. The man who almost blew it. Learn from my lesson. Stay in God’s Word and prayer—daily. Keep your priorities straight. Life on earth is for the battle. Eternal life in heaven is for the celebration. I’m home with the Lord now. We’ll be waiting for you.”

WRAP UP

And so ends our visit today. We hope to inspire you with future times together. I hope you’ll find us “MORE THAN TALK” as we tackle life’s questions with answers that stand the test of time. Tell your friends about this new half hour drama and documentary. And stand by to meet all kinds of characters and events that can only help open your eyes and mine to what real life is all about. I’m Frank Eiklor. Until we meet again, may God show you how real He is – and just how much He loves you!