

Purpose

Brown Community Group November 3, 2019

We are seeing more and more in the media, ads, movies, etc. about “Making a Difference.” It is no longer enough to produce a good product or provide good service, you must show how that product or service benefits society, no matter how thin that link is. Why is that? Is society becoming more caring or moral? Are we now more God-like? Are we a more religious country? Actually...no.

According to the Pew Research Center, the number of religiously unaffiliated grew from 16.1% of the US adult population in 2007 to 22.8% in 2014. This includes atheist, agnostics and that that are “nothing in particular.” Of this group 37% don’t believe in God. (Interestingly, 89% of atheists surveyed did not believe in God which means most have not even thought about it.).

So what is the deal? The answer is that more and more people want to make a difference.

According to a [new study](#) done by The Society for Human Resource Management, “94 percent of millennials want to use their skills to benefit a cause and 57 percent wish that there were more company-wide service days.” They have made it clear that social impact is not only a want, but a need in their potential employers. If millennials aren’t motivated by money on the job hunt, they are often aiming to make the world a better place by working for companies that are compassionate, innovative and sustainable.

Forbes Magazine, June 9, 2017

So this is a good thing, right? People wanting to make difference, helping people, adopting a cause, that’s good, right? Well, yes...and no. First we must look at WHY people want to make a difference.

Why We Want to Make a Difference

As William Lane Craig demonstrated in his book on apologetics, if God does not exist, life is absurd. Why? If God does not exist, life has no meaning, value or purpose.

- Meaning – why something matters. Without God we are just part of the evolutionary process and nothing you do will matter to future generations.
- Value – good or evil, good or bad, desirable or undesirable. An ever more popular idea: “There is no good or bad” or “don’t be judgmental” or “everything is relative.”
- Purpose – a goal or reason for something. If you are born, live, then die, there is no purpose.

But people DO have meaning and purpose in their lives. What about someone who is a good mom or dad, someone who helps an elderly parent or a mentor in school? If God does not exist, any meaning, value or purpose someone has is only a human illusion. Your choice: human illusion or life is absurd. Tough call. Or, as Bill Johnson said: “Without God, you can be happy or consistent, but not both.”

Furthermore, what if my meaning/value/purpose conflicts with yours? Since there is no law, we are left to the court of public opinion. Which changes. It is best to err on the side of opinion that most people hold lest right and wrong changes. Is this getting more absurd?

What Does it Matter as Long as I do Good and Make a Difference?

Good question. From the outside, nothing. However, it is your motives that change whether the deed is good or bad. The end does not justify the means. Many people of questionable character have charities in their name or support popular causes. Should we give them a pass?

What Would Jesus say?

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’



Emily Litella



Grumpy Old Man

¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

Matthew 23:13:28 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

¹⁵ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴ You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

²⁵ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

²⁷ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Luke 11:45 One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also."

Ananias and Sapphira

Acts 5:1-11 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

⁹ Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Finally, consider part of "The Screwtape Letters." In it the book Screwtape, a servant of Satan, instructs his nephew on how to win converts on Earth and away from the Enemy (Jesus). The book was written in 1942 and the "cause" of the day was whether to support the war effort or to be a pacifist. Note the strategy:

Whichever he adopts, your main task will be the same. Let him begin by treating the Patriotism or the Pacifism as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the stage at which the religion becomes merely part of the "cause", in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce in favour of the British war-effort or of Pacifism. The attitude which you want to guard against is that in which temporal affairs are treated primarily as material for obedience. Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing. Provided that meetings, pamphlets, policies, movements, causes, and crusades, matter more to him than prayers and sacraments and charity, he is ours-and the more "religious" (on those terms) the more securely ours. I could show you a pretty cageful down here,

Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE