

The very nature of being human makes for interesting study. I admire the human spirit which pushes itself to achieve above and beyond the basic and normal. At the Olympics, para-Olympics, and the Invictus Games championed by Prince Harry, we hear of people who defied the odds and pushed beyond acceptable human limits, to set new world records. I admire the human spirit of adventure, people conquering new worlds, blazing new trails, oblivious of the risks and dangers lurking around each corner.

There is also an element in our human nature which is the total opposite: to be comfortable with life, to remain where we are, to accept what we have, is the best it can be, *hakuna matata*, no worries.

There are dangers lurking in both these conditions in our human nature. On the one hand to push and achieve world records, on the other to accept the status quo as the best it can be, both are centred on the self.

Its all about ***I, me and myself***, the new trinity. *Look at me, I have achieved*, and *Leave me alone. I don't want to push myself*. Strangely, and in an awkward way, these traits in human nature are all about self-gratification.

The Gospel according to Frank Sinatra sums it up beautifully in the words of his swan-song, *I did it **MY** way!*

I planned each charted course;
Each careful step along the byway,
And more, much more than this,
I did it my way.

Yes, there were times,

I'm sure you knew

When I bit off more than I could chew.

But through it all, when there was doubt, I ate it up and spit it out. I faced it all and I stood tall; And did it my way

So far, we can accept Ol' Blue Eyes bragging, then he gets serious. This is where it becomes a kind of *theology*:

For what is a man, what has he got?

If not himself, then he has naught.

To say the things he truly feels;

And not the words, of one who kneels

The record shows I took the blows -

And did it my way!

Like it or not, popular culture is a religion; it defines a kind of god (self), it encourages certain values and it teaches a way of life.

I would have liked to quote you from the popular music of today, but alas it is not advisable to use some the language in church, and second, I cannot snap my fingers and whip my hand to rhythm!

It is, however, apparent that the religion of popular culture teaches us, life is all about ***I, me and myself***, and it has taught us, *For what is a man, what has he got? If not himself, then he has naught. To say the things he truly feels; And not the words of one who kneels.*

When we listen to songs of our popular culture, we ask ourselves, why are so many relationships unstable and fickle? If the focus of my life is myself, and I invest all my time and energy on myself, because *L'Oreal* says "I'm worth it!", is it any wonder that so many people are finding it difficult to stay in a relationship?

Not just our relationships with our spouse, children, family, friends and colleagues; the evidence is that it spills over and also affects our relationship with God! Can we really enjoy a relationship with God and His Son, Jesus our Christ, if all we do is focus on ourselves, and not have time to listen what God has to say?

Contrast this to the hymn we sang earlier, which is the exact opposite of the religion of popular culture:

As the deer pants for the water
So my soul longs after You
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You.
You alone are my strength my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You!

The hymn portrays a worshipper who ***Thirsts*** for a relationship with God, as a deer would pant, gasp for water.

So, WHY do we thirst? The obvious answer is, we thirst because we are thirsty. Over the last decade, there is interesting research being conducted to understand the mechanisms by which the brain and body cooperate to stabilise

our internal environment, which is called *homeostasis*. There is special interest in *fluid homeostasis*, the mechanism that regulates the balance of water and salt in our body, which when imbalanced in a certain way, might have an impact on blood pressure.

My interest is in the question, ***Why do we thirst?***, and the early findings are very interesting.

We thirst because the ratio (balance) of water to salt in the body is not right, and the mind tells the body to reset the equilibrium. When water or salt are depleted in the body, the brain generates a signal that causes either a thirst for water, or a craving for salt.

Water and salt are two elements crucial to our well-being, and to overcome dehydration.

Now consider Jesus' teaching: To the woman at the well in Samaria, Jesus says, ***If you had only known and recognised God's gift, and Who this is that is saying to you, Give Me a drink, YOU would have asked Him instead, and He would have given you Living Water.***

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, ***YOU are the salt of the earth.*** The balance of Living Water and the salt of the earth, is absolutely necessary to accomplish God's kingdom on earth.

In several Psalms, the singer-song-writer, the priest, the prayer-warrior, the hurting soul, cries out in painful thirst, because in their relationship with God, there was more of themselves and less of God; more of ***I, me and myself***, and less of God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit; more salt of the earth and less Living Water.

We begin to understand, to thirst for God, is to desire deep in our soul, to push the *reset button* and restore some semblance of peace and order, to distance ourselves from the created chaos which rules this world.

During our Good Friday service, we remember the "seven words" Jesus spoke whilst hanging on the cross. The fifth word he spoke was, ***I thirst.*** Everything about Jesus was in fulfilment of Scripture. This fifth statement from the cross is in fulfilment of Psalm 69:21 (Note: Jesus is **NOT** fulfilling Scripture, Jesus is not playacting Scripture; Scripture is being fulfilled on the cross), ***They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.***

In eternity past, God saw the heart of a Roman soldier moved, to offer Jesus a sponge soaked in vinegar to quench His thirst.

I wonder, however, while Jesus' humanity cried for resetting the imbalance brought on by loss of body fluids, His Divinity cried out to restore His relationship with His Father, which was severely, although temporarily imbalanced during his journey on earth.

On the final day, in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Son of God thirsted for Father God, *If it be Your will, take this cup from Me, but let it Your will, not Mine.*

What a contrast to the religion of popular culture! *It's not about me Father! It about You and Your will for me!* Thirsting for God, thrusting to be restored into the perfect relationship God created us to have with Him!

The Psalms is a collection of heartfelt, personal prayers, which express a thirst for God, and the person praying, finds the thirst-quenching drink which has the right balance between Living Water and the salt of the earth.

Let me leave you with a thought from A. W. Tozer, an American Christian, a pastor, preacher, author, magazine editor, and spiritual mentor who said, ***Nothing twists and deforms the soul more than a low or unworthy conception of God.***¹

Popular culture is very entertaining. The music, videos and stage settings may be enchanting, but the gospel of Frank Sinatra, Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston, Puff Daddy and yes, the Beatles, offer us a religion which focuses on ***I, Me and Myself***, and it twists and deforms the soul because it offers us a low and unworthy understanding of God.

Once again, I commend to you the Book of Psalms. Don't struggle with questions like, *if there is a God, why is there so much pain and suffering?*, and *Why do good people suffer?*, and *Why won't God answer my prayer?*, and *I am not good enough for God!*

I commend to you, the Book of Psalms. Read it and study it. If you are serious about your questions, you **WILL** find the answers, and like a well balanced isotonic drink, your thirst **WILL** be quenched! **AMEN.**

¹ The Root of the Righteous, p17 by Aiden Wilson Tozer.