

*IS THAT ALL
THERE IS?*



"Is that all there is?" The career goals you worked for, the rock face you wanted to climb, the championship you sweated all season for: they're all behind you. Now you're wondering why you don't feel as good as you should.

What's going on? You're at the peak. Everyone else thinks you're a success. Why don't you *feel* as though you are?

MAYBE THIS TIME

Some people go on a search for pleasure. But the seventh drink rarely tastes as good as the first. The 100th gourmet meal is missing something. Some think the perfect sexual experience is just around the corner. Maybe this person, maybe this time. Maybe next.

Some people go on a search for knowledge. But there's too much knowledge. No person can absorb it. You can get diplomas, degrees, higher degrees. You can know all the jargon and reach the peak of academic achievement. And you'll still be empty as a human being.

How many cars can you drive? How many Boards can one person try to control? There is always someone richer than you. You've never quite arrived.

Is it power you want? Really? There have been some very powerful people this century. Adolph Hitler, Josef Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung. No, you say, you want democratic power. Well, the most democratic power a person can have is to be President of the USA. First, you have to be born there. Second, you can only do two terms (if you win your second election and the media don't get you sooner). And then it's memoir writing time, after which the historians rip you to shreds.

It's the same in the sporting field. You want to become world champion? There's nowhere to go but down. It's hard to keep in form and still go boozing to celebrate after each match.

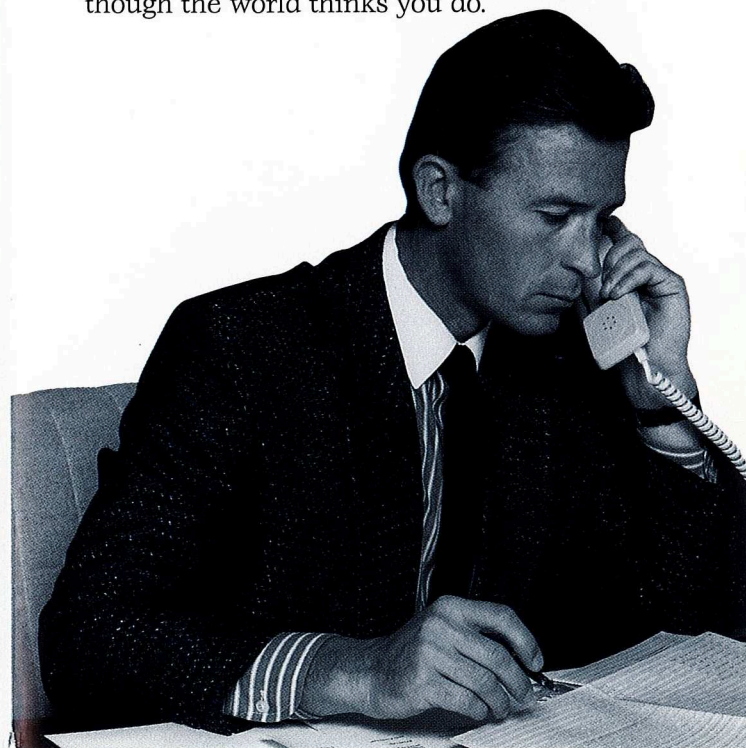
There's nothing wrong with striving for success in study or business. Nothing wrong with making money, exercising power, experiencing pleasure. These things aren't wrong in themselves and they can make your life richer. But if these things are your prime goals, then the facts of life will catch up with you. It's a no-win situation.

THE FACTS OF LIFE

For the sensualist, the facts of life are cardiac arrest, liver failure, sexually transmitted diseases and the incapacity to make lasting adult relationships.

For the athlete, the facts of life are that your body deteriorates. Muhammed Ali was possibly the best heavyweight the world's ever seen, and he couldn't stay at the top. What chance have you got?

For the intellectual, the facts of life are 'publish or perish', and the reality of knowing that you don't have all the answers, even though the world thinks you do.



For the person whose prime goals are money or power, the facts of life are that there is always someone doing better than you, and even if you get to spend five minutes at the top, it's tyranny. There is no rest, only fear. You're never going to stay there.

THERE'S MORE, MUCH MORE

"The person who has the most when they die, wins," reads one T-shirt. But when you're dead you don't have anything. Someone else has got it. And you've got no control over how they spend it! So the feeling, "Is that all there is?" can be an accurate one.

If you define your success as a human being in terms of your success in seduction, money or power, then that really is all there is. It's all going to get taken away from you, either by time, or your rivals or death.

But is that really the case? Lots of people don't think so. For a start, the "Is that all there is?" feeling generally comes from someone whose life has been pivoted around their success as an individual. It's a popular philosophy. We even write songs about it. But this is mental garbage and if you swallow it whole you're living on an all-garbage diet. The facts of life will destroy you, and everything will lose its taste.

We are unique creations designed for relationship, dependent on each other and the rest of creation. The rich person eats because somebody else grows food. The farming family grows food because the planet is capable of supporting life. The planet is capable of supporting life because of the way it was created.

The richest person in the world is not independent. The most powerful person, the most knowledgeable person, the fittest athlete, the most discriminating gourmet, the most

liked 'mate', the most loved woman, the most successful sexual scalp hunter, none is an island. They are part of an intricately woven fabric of life.

GOD LOVES YOU AS YOU ARE

Beyond the individual is the creation we were made to be part of. And in and beyond the creation is the Creator who loves you as you are.

As a success, as a failure, God loves you, you don't have to perform. That's the real fact of life. And living, knowing that you have the best, starts here.

Jesus told a story of a rich young man who'd made it to the top, but paid the price for his blind ambition. His farm had produced a bumper crop. "I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones to store all my grain and my goods. I'll say to myself, 'You've plenty of good things laid up for years. Take it easy, enjoy life'."

But God said to him, "You fool! Tonight your life will be demanded from you. Then who'll get what you've prepared for yourself?"*

Life is full of uncertainties. Life at the top is a fragile experience at the best of times. It is said that there are two inescapable realities: death and taxes. You might be able to minimise the second, but only Jesus can help you negotiate the first. In the end, it's the only fact of life you need to know.

*See the full parable in Luke 12:13-34.

Written by Tony Morphett in consultation with the AIC Committee.

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