

ARE YOU LEADING A LIFE OF “QUIET DESPERATION”

By Nino Boezio

One of the more notable American philosophers, poets and essayists of the early 19th century was Henry David Thoreau.

In one of his famous books called *Walden*, he wrote, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation...”

The book focused on living simply within a natural environment. The reference to quiet desperation touches upon a number of issues that still plague many today.

People become quietly desperate as they feel rather defeated by life. They can become frustrated and view themselves trapped by circumstances. They are negative and turned off. They feel unfulfilled. This mindset of desperation can exist even within those who have made great life achievements and appear successful to others.

Thoreau responded to this attitude by choosing to “live deliberately” as he called it. He chose to take life on aggressively, which in his case, meant going into the woods and taking on whatever nature could throw at him.

Our society leads us to a sense of desperation by promoting those things which will still leave us feeling empty in the end. Even if we are able to accumulate a vast amount of wealth, attain fame and fortune, and become surrounded by beauty, we will still find we need something else. Sometimes the response to this inner emptiness is to strive to get even more of everything.

As human beings, we need to realize there is a spiritual dimension to our existence. We cannot satisfy our inner wants and needs through physical accomplishments and pursuits. We need to understand the purpose of life, why we exist, and what we are supposed to achieve.

Thoreau responded by resorting to a life of simplicity, by going back to his roots so to speak. He wanted nature to teach him lessons. He departed from the things that would just give him unnecessary distractions.

We need to go deeper than Thoreau did. In Genesis 1:26 God says He made human beings after the God-kind. When you contemplate what this means, it will change your perspective on life tremendously. We are on a character building exercise, with the ultimate goal of becoming like the Creator God.

Society lays out a destination for us, but it’s not well-informed on its ultimate value. Even if evidence exists regarding the resulting emptiness of

various accomplishments, our world still seeks to deny that observation. People want to believe that's all they need.

Wise king Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes wrote, "All is vanity and a striving after wind" (Ecclesiastes 1:14, 2:17, 4:4, 4:16). Overall, much of what we do is rather vain and empty, and we will still feel hungry at the end.

It is important that we understand the purpose of our life as God defined it, and we will not be quietly desperate anymore. I suspect that Thoreau would also agree.

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