

The Paradoxes of Life

*In him was **life** and the **life** was the light of men.*

John 1.4

Paradoxes of Life

Chaos:

I'm perplexed and life seems
dangerously out of control...

vs.

My normal response to both:

Try to Take Control

Paradox:

I'm perplexed and life seems
dangerously in control...

(by God)

Paradoxes of Life

Chaos:

I'm scared...

God seems absent

vs.

Paradox:

I'm scared...

God seems abstract

Paradoxes of Life

Matthew 10.39

Whoever *finds* his life will *lose* it,
and whoever *loses* his life for my sake
will *find* it.

Paradoxes of Life

Paradox: a statement that is
seemingly contradictory
or opposed to common sense
and yet is perhaps true.

Paradoxes of Life

Life Examples:

- The more we know, the more we don't know.
- Pursuing happiness results in unhappiness.
- We can become proud of our humility.
- Failing wisely is the path to success.
- God can (and does) use sin sinlessly. *(All things work...)*

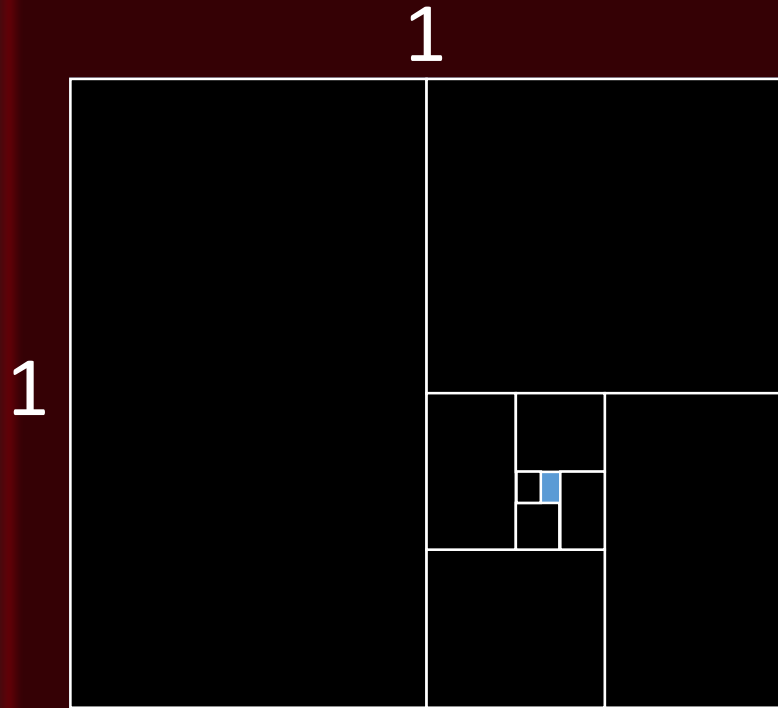
Paradoxes of Life

A (very) brief introduction
to Calculus

Exploring the Infinite

Paradoxes of Life

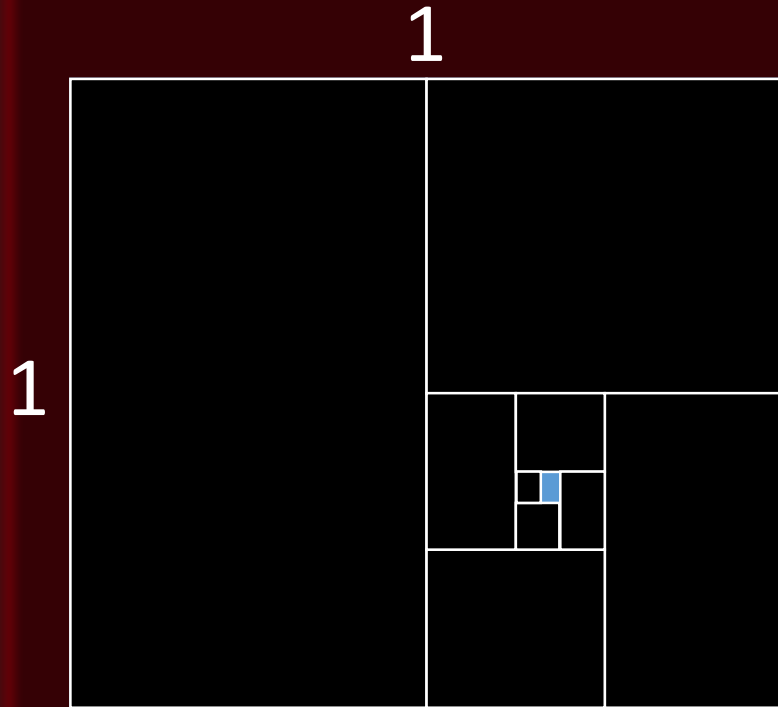
Is it possible to add up
an infinite number of things?



$$1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8 + 1/16 + \dots = \mathbf{1}$$

Paradoxes of Life

Is it possible to add up
an infinite number of things?



$$1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8 + 1/16 + \dots = \mathbf{1}$$

however:

$$1/2 + 1/3 + 1/4 + 1/5 + \dots \text{diverges}$$

Paradoxes of Life

So, is it possible to add up
an infinite number of things?

It depends...

Do the added up “things” become
small enough fast enough?

Paradoxes of Life

So, is it possible to add up
an infinite number of things?

How long is “now”?

Our lifetime:

Experiencing an infinite number of infinitely small “nows”.

Paradoxes of Life

The distance between God and us
is infinitely small...
which means our infinite God is
also infinitely near.

Divine transcendence and immanence

Paradoxes of Life

Paradox: a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true.

Niels Bohr

Danish physicist who is generally regarded as one of the foremost physicists of the 20th century. He was the first to apply the quantum concept, which restricts the energy of a system to certain discrete values, to the problem of atomic and molecular structure. For that work he received the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1922.

Paradoxes of Life

Niels Bohr

A central element of the Copenhagen interpretation is Bohr's complementarity principle, presented for the first time in 1927 at a conference in Como, Italy.

According to complementarity, on the atomic level, a physical phenomenon expresses itself differently depending on the experimental setup used to **observe** it.

Paradoxes of Life

Niels Bohr

Thus, light appears sometimes as **waves** and sometimes as **particles**. For a complete explanation, both aspects, which according to classical physics are contradictory, need to be taken into account.

The other towering figure of physics in the 20th century, Albert Einstein, never accepted the Copenhagen interpretation, famously declaring against its probabilistic implications that “God does not play dice.”

Paradoxes of Life

“How wonderful that we have met with a paradox.
Now we have some hope of making progress.”

~Niels Bohr

Paradoxes of Life

Making progress in the Christian life consists of wrestling through some major paradoxes in the Bible:

1. God as Trinity...Is God one or three?
2. Hypostatic Union...Is Jesus God or man?
3. Sanctification of the believer...God's role or mine?
4. God is sovereign or does man have a free will?

Paradoxes of Life

Making progress in the Christian life consists of wrestling through some major paradoxes in the Bible:

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Paradoxes of Life

Changing one word in each statement
validates Biblical truth...

(But it also creates paradoxes)

1. God as Trinity... God is one AND three
2. Hypostatic Union... Jesus is God AND man
3. Sanctification of the believer... God's role AND mine
4. God is sovereign AND man has a free will

Paradoxes of Life

Russ Ramsey

“Our culture races to the logical fallacy that says if something doesn’t make sense to me, it must not make sense at all.

What a tragically *small* view of the world folded into an even more tragically *large* view of ourselves.

Paradoxes of Life

Russ Ramsey

We were made to wonder, to form questions in our hearts that no other human being can answer — questions that belong to a world that transcends what we can comprehend.

These questions do not drive us away from God; they draw us near.”

Paradoxes of Life

Russ Ramsey

“Theological understanding should not become a substitute for faith. Studied rightly, theology should lead to *awe and wonder*.”

My questions about God increase in number not because I know less but *because I know more*.

And as my questions increase, so does my *faith*, which Scripture esteems as a *higher prize* than *certainty*.”

Paradoxes of Life

1 Cor. 13.12

For now we see in a mirror *dimly*, but then
face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully,
even as I have been fully known.

Paradoxes of Life

In Christianity, are paradoxes
the exception to the rule?

(Or are they the rule?...what we should actually expect in life?)

What we need is to embrace the paradoxes in life
rather than merely dismissing them as annoying.

Paradoxes of Life

How to embrace the paradox:

1. Recognize we live in a logical either / or world.
2. Intentionally apply the principle of both / and.
3. This requires:
 - ...faith rather than sight
 - ...trust rather than self-reliance
 - ...humility rather than pride.

Paradoxes of Life

Aiden W. Tozer

To have *found God* and *still to pursue Him*
is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed
by the too easily satisfied religionist,
but justified in happy experience
by the children of the burning heart.

~ *The Pursuit of God*, p.14

Paradoxes of Life

Aiden W. Tozer

“Tozer’s devotional life was characterized by rigid fervency...he spent hours in his prayer closet, lying prostrate before the Lord.”

But...

Surprised by Paradox...p.85

Paradoxes of Life

- *Life of faith or financial well-being?*
- *Time with God or time with my children?*
- *Pursuit of God or pursuit of my wife?*

The Christian Life must be
a life of AND...not OR!!!

Paradoxes of Life

Logic demands “**or**” ... Faith requires “**and**”

For example, how do we reconcile
the following:

Waiting vs. Pursuing

Paradoxes of Life

Waiting vs. Pursuing

Some verses in the Psalms seem to contradict
other verses in the Psalms

Wait: Ps 27.14, etc. (Wait for the Lord)

Pursue: Ps 63.1, etc. (Earnestly I seek You)

What might it look like to embrace AND rather than OR?

Paradoxes of Life

2 Corinthians 3.18

And we all, with unveiled face,
beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed
into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- While I am beholding, God is transforming.
- I pursue God by waiting for Him to work.
- I wait for God by pursuing Him with all that I am.

Paradoxes of Life

Galatians 2.20

I have been crucified with Christ. *It is no longer I who live*, but Christ who lives in me.

And *the life I now live* in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

➤ “No longer I who live” vs. “the life I now live”

AND not OR...

Paradoxes of Life

Jesus frequently used paradoxes
in His teaching about life.

We should be asking why.

Matthew 13.13

This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Paradoxes of Life

Purpose of paradoxes

1. To confront the smug certainty of the Pharisees.

“You have heard that it was said...but I say to you” (Mt. 5.17-48)

2. To challenge believers to live by faith rather than sight.

“the righteous shall live by faith” (Rom 1.17) (Gal 3.11)

3. To create humility and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

*Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts...”* (Heb 3.7-8)

Paradoxes of Life

Purpose of paradoxes

Paradoxes require faith to **believe** but even more faith to **live!**

- *Only when you are **weak**, will you will be **strong**. (1 Cor 1.27)*
- *Only when you place yourself **last**, will you be **first**. (Mt 20.16)*
- *Only when you **give away**, will you be **rich**. (Mk 10.21) (Pv 11.24)*
- *Only when you **die**, will you truly **live**. (Gal 2.20) (Lk 17.23)*

Paradoxes of Life

Purpose of paradoxes

Paradoxes require faith to **believe** but even more faith to **live!**

- *Only when we become **fools**, will we be **wise**. (1 Cor 3.18)*
- *Only when we are **humble**, will we be **exalted**. (Mt 23.12)*
- *Only when we choose **not to practice our righteousness** before others, will **God shine through us**. (Mt 6.1) (Mt 5.16)*
- *Only when we are careful **not to judge**, are we **able to judge** with righteous judgment. (Mt 7.1) (Jn 7.24)*

Paradoxes of Life

Why is this so difficult for us?

1. Fairness

2. We Skip Steps

Paradoxes of Life

Why is this so difficult for us?

1. Fairness

a child's instinctive reply to inequity?

“that's not *fair*!”

(So easy to confuse *fairness* with *equality*) - \$ and Christmas

Paradoxes of Life

Parables

1. Laborers... “do you begrudge my generosity?”

(Mt 20.1-16)

2. Minas... “give it to the one who has the ten”

(Lk 19.11-26)

3. Good soil... “some 100 fold, some 60, some 30”

(Mt 13.1-9)

Paradoxes of Life

Grace is not fair

It's not fair that Jesus suffered
and died for you and me

Paradoxes of Life

Why is this so difficult for us?

2. We skip steps

A recent headline:

“Running caused me to gain weight”

Paradoxes of Life

Running

Tired

Watch TV

Food commercials

I'm really hungry

Eat an entire bag of Doritos

Weight Gain

Paradoxes of Life

Running = Weight Gain

Not really a paradox

(Just missing a few steps in the middle)

Paradoxes of Life

Matthew 10.39

Whoever *finds* his life will *lose* it,
and whoever *loses* his life for my sake
will *find* it.

Paradoxes of Life

Matthew 10.39

Whoever *finds* his life will *lose* it,

“He who dies with the most toys wins.”

“If only I could win the lottery, my life would be good.”

“I’m trying to check off all the things on my ‘bucket list’.”

“I think I need to trade in my spouse for a new one.”

Paradoxes of Life

Matthew 10.39

Whoever *finds* his life will *lose* it,

“My life was brilliant but the lottery ruined everything. My dreams turned to dust... What’s the point of having money when it sends you to bed crying?” ~*Happiness, Alcorn, p. 82*

Paradoxes of Life

Matthew 10.39

Whoever *finds* his life will *lose* it,
and whoever *loses* his life for my sake
will *find* it.

Paradoxes of Life

Paradox of Grace

Jen Pollock Michel

1. Receiving grace takes *effort*...the effort of *being still*.

(*Ps 46.10*...Be still, and know that I am God... context: War!)

2. “We must stop using the fact that we cannot earn grace as an excuse for not *energetically seeking* to receive grace.”

(*Col 1.29*...I toil, struggling with all *his* energy that *he* powerfully works within me.)

Paradoxes of Life

Paradox of Grace

3. While grace is the news we most long to hear, it's one of the hardest things to grasp in life with God.

4. Let's turn to God with all the prayerful hope that his grace is sufficient to meet us in our wondering and wandering... never thinking that God's business is information but transformation.

~ Jen Pollock Michel: Surprised by Paradox

Paradoxes of Life

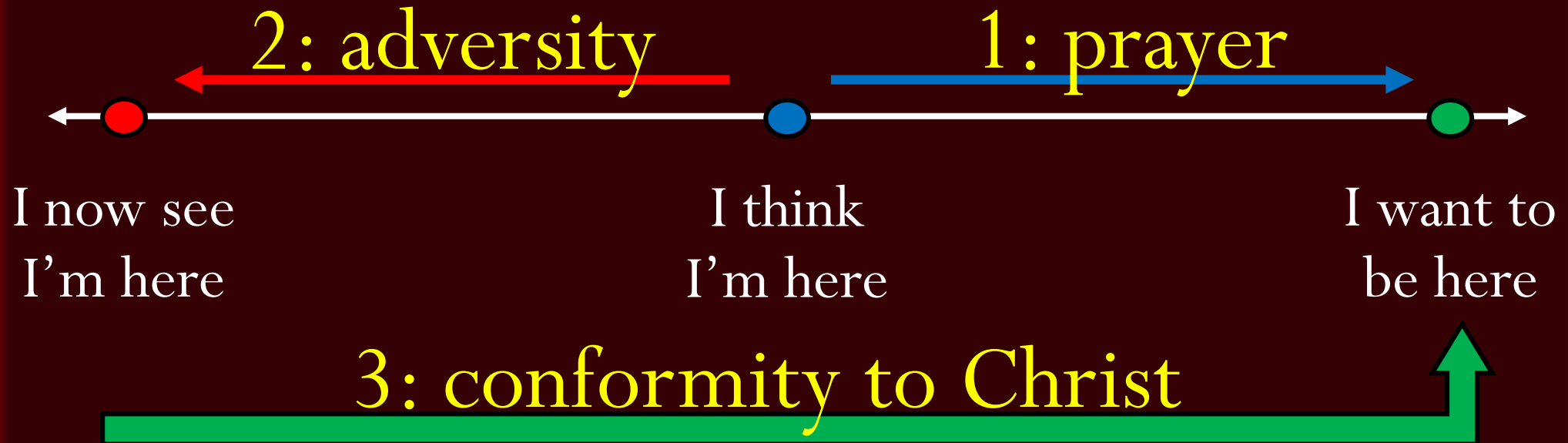
Paradox of Grace

People *need grace* the most when
they deserve it the least.

(broken water line and the irony)

Paradoxes of Life

Progress in the Christian life
happens through regress.



Paradoxes of Life

A person in a dark jacket and hat is walking away from the camera across a narrow suspension bridge. The bridge has wooden planks and metal railings. The background is a dense, lush green forest. The scene is framed by a white border.

"HARDSHIPS OFTEN
PREPARE ORDINARY PEOPLE
FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY
DESTINY."

- C.S. LEWIS -

Paradoxes of Life

Question for discussion:

Why does Jesus utilize so many paradoxes and what implications does this have on our lives?