

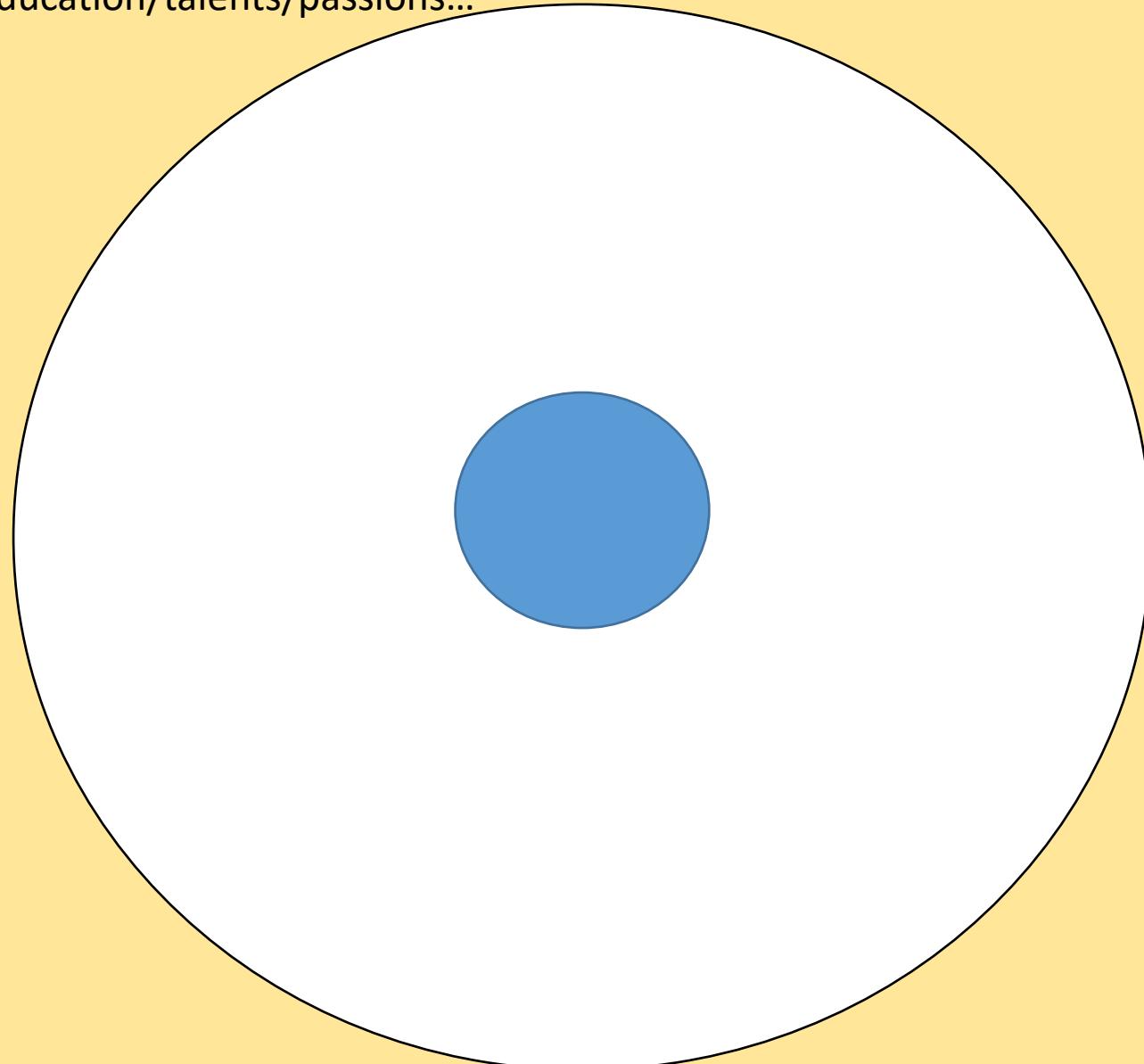
# What is the problem with the world?

The Christian faith says one of the key problems is that humankind has forgotten that all of life is a \_\_\_\_gift\_\_\_\_

The theological word for this is \_\_\_\_grace\_\_\_\_

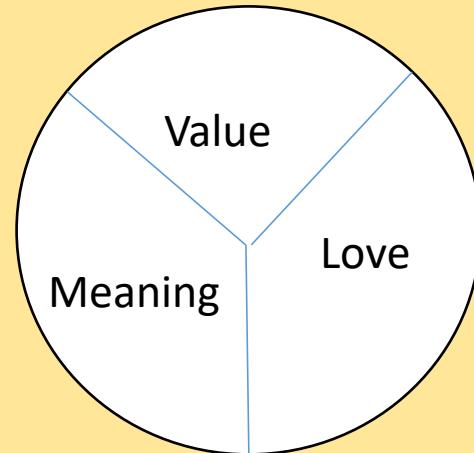
Cover this page with words of things that you would describe as “ordinary graces” everyday things that lift your spirit/ make you happy/or simply the everyday things we need and have

Fill in the white circle with **Particular Graces** –  
things/people that are yours alone: your spouse, your pet,  
your children, your job, your education/talents/passions...



Now insert the three words below into the centre circle of your diagram

**Value** = I need to know that I matter, I know my own worth, I have a voice, I know what I can do well.  
Another word for this is SELF-WORTH.



**Meaning** = I need to know that my life has a purpose, I feel like I am part of something greater. Another word for this is SIGNIFICANCE

**Love** = I need to know that I am unconditionally accepted by at least one person who knows my flaws. This kind of love is unearned, sometimes even undeserved and makes me feel deeply secure. Another word for this is SIGNIFICANCE

# So what is wrong with the world

The Bible teaches that

- Humans have forgotten/rejected the idea that everything is a gift
- Therefore they don't give 'thanks' or live with gratitude.
- Humans expect, misuse or hoard the gifts.
- When you think you are entitled to something, you see things differently from seeing you are blessed (graced with gifts).

Grace upon Grace: now build up the three layers

Layer 1: ordinary gifts - we all like different things

Add in layer 2: particular gifts – different for all of us (if you don’t think your job is a gift because you worked hard for it, ask yourself who gave you the intelligence to merit the job?)

Add in layer 3: personal gifts – the three biggest need that every human being has: love, meaning and value. These are the same for everyone. Think of them as ‘tanks’. We need these tanks to be as full as possible to function well as human beings. The trouble is that for all of us they are only *partially* filled by items from the first two circles. This partially filling is great but only God can give us these gifts so fully that we know we are always a loved, valuable and significant child of God no matter how empty our outer two circles.

But isn't this all too 'twee'? Too simplistic an answer to the problem, 'what is wrong with the world?'

Maybe your 'ordinary/particular/personal' grace picture looks like looks like your personal version of 'All things Bright and Beautiful'? A lovely mindfulness exercise but not much good for explaining why the world and people are so messed up.

So now add in add in

**Sex** (wow, look how closely this mimics love!)

**Power** (if you lack significance maybe this will do instead?)

**Money** (a big bank balance might go someway to fill the worth void?)

These three things are also gifts. They are morally neutral but they can be put to good **OR** bad use

<u>Gifts</u>	<u>Good use</u>	<u>Bad use</u>
<b>Sex</b>	mutual consensual respectful pleasure  <b>God's ideal is: faithful, public commitment, monogamous</b>	abuse, sexting, prostitution, pornography
<b>Power</b>	Authority used in service of others  <b>Authority is delegated from God Romans 13:1</b> <b>The greatest among you are those who serve</b> <b>Matthew 20:26</b>	Power used to dominate others for status, control, manipulation (bullies big and small)
<b>Money</b>	Income  <b>Generous giving is encouraged for the purpose of equality 2 Corinthians 8:13-14</b>	Wealth that excludes the poor, vulnerable or weak

Notice how these needs (love, meaning, value) are also linked to our fears and our failings

GIFTS

**Sex**

FEARS

'I'm unlovable/ugly'

FAILINGS

obsessive body fixation, trying to look good *or* giving up and abusing our bodies

**Power**

'I need to be in control'

intolerance/impatience with uncertainty, pain, and with people who don't do what we think they should do for us

**Money**

'I don't have enough'

*or*

'there isn't enough for us all'  
(this fear makes me afraid of others who I perceive to be undeserving).

selfishly hoarding my wealth, well beyond what I need, not being willing to share

Whether you answer the question ‘what’s wrong with the world?’ for a child or for an adult – the answer is the same.

Humankind have forgotten:

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the Heavenly Lights, who does not change like the shifting shadows” James 1:17

Or they do not acknowledge God

“Fools say in their hearts, ‘there is no God.’” Psalm 14:1

Or they do not acknowledge their own failings:

“If we claim to be without, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” 1 John 1:8

Or they prefer to live without God

“Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” John 3:19

# So what the problem with the world?

## (According to the Christian Faith)

*The Times once sent out an inquiry to famous authors, asking the question, “What’s wrong with the world today?” and Chesterton responded simply,*

“Dear Sir,  
I am.  
Yours, G.K. Chesterton.”

In the *Gulag Archipelago*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote:

“If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”

(see Romans 7:15)

# So can the world be put right? What should I do?

- Acknowledge and thank God who is the giver of every good thing.
- Behave towards others in a way that recognises they have worth, value and meaning equal to yours
- Come to an understanding that you can be (right now, just as you are) a beloved, unique child of God with a unique purpose to fulfil.

Didn't someone wise already say that? Yes, indeed they did:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to *do justice*, and to *love kindness*,  
and to *walk humbly with your God*?

Micah 6:8 The Old Testament part of the Bible