



May 8, 2024

MESSENGER

QUOTE FOR TODAY

"You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."
Psalm 16:11

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POOF!

What is the meaning of a person's life? That's a question humans have struggled with in every age and culture. We are amazing creatures, with great potential to analyze and control the world around us. Yet, we are surprisingly frail, subject to bacterial and viral diseases, and vulnerable to natural disasters and severe weather events. One way or another, an individual's life is usually over in a few decades:

The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. (Psalm 90:10)

Two familiar Bible passages, one in the Old Testament, the other in the New Testament, describe the significance of a single human life using a word with the root meaning of an exhaled breath --- *POOF!*

Poof! Poof! All is Poof!

(Usually translated: *Vanity of vanities! All is vanity*)

What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun?

A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.

All is Poof! and a chasing after wind.

I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly.

*I perceived that this also is but a **chasing after wind**. (Ecclesiastes 1:3-4, 14, 17)*

*Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money." Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For **you are a Poof** (usually translated: a mist or a vapor) that appears for a little while and then vanishes. (James 4:13-14)*

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Continued from other side

Both the Hebrew word *hebel* used by Ecclesiastes and the Greek word *atmis* (from which we get *atmosphere* in English) used by James come from a root meaning "an exhaled breath." So these two Bible writers sum up a person's life -- *- me or you --- as a POOF!*

I don't know how atheists deal with this, but as a believer, I find comfort and reassurance in the context of both Ecclesiastes and James. These two inspired writers, separated by more than 500 years, testified that the *Poof!* Of their earthly life was given meaning by the fact that God noticed them and cared about them. It's as if God poofed back and kept their breathing going. That's exactly what Genesis tells us happened:

*The Lord God formed man from the [poofy] dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils **the breath of life**, and the man became a living being.* (Genesis 2:7)

Revisiting Psalm 90,
the *poofy conclusion of verse 10*

The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away

is cushioned by the solid reality of the psalm's beginning and ending:

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the

mountains were brought forth or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. (verses 1-2)

So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart. Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us and prosper for us the work of our hands. O prosper the work of our hands! (verses 12-17)

Poof! We breathe us out. *Aaah!* We breathe God in. Spiritual Life!

Pastor George Van Alstine