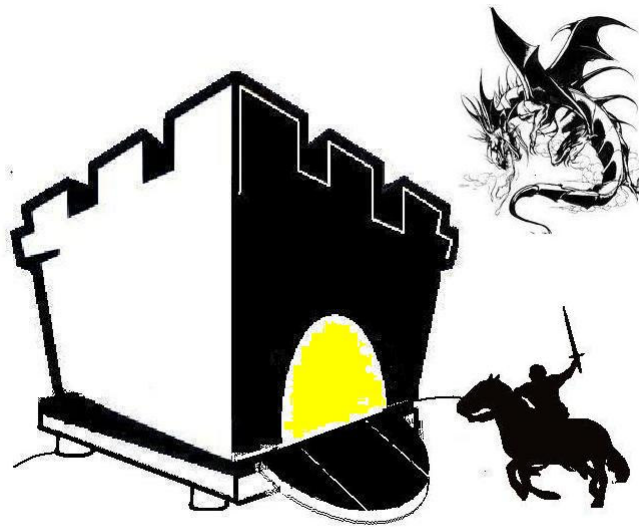


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# Fortress Living



Three Solutions for Your Greatest Problems in Life

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## Fortress Living: Three Solutions for your Greatest Problems in Life

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### Lesson Two

#### Solving the Insoluble

Carl Jung may have given up hope that he could solve the greatest problems of his life. But you can be sure he never gave up his pursuit. Another description of this process is *the will to live*. Until he breathed his last breath, Jung and all of us are in pursuit. We want protection, gratification and validation. Everyone is searching. So, even though Jung said the problems are insoluble, as long as he lived he was building his own solution. And so is everyone else.

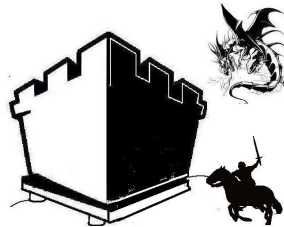
Before we look at specific solutions to the greatest problems in life, we need to lay out the framework for what a solution would look like should it be found. Only then will we be adequately prepared to evaluate whether the offered solutions are satisfactory.

If we think about solving the greatest problems of life as building a building, what is involved in the construction process? Essentially, there are three things. So there are three things necessary for any solution to the greatest problems of life:

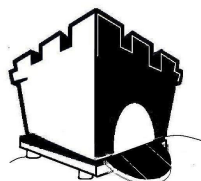
- A Foundation –The Norms of Life



- A Structure –The Situations of Life



- An Access – The Relationships of Life



## Fortress Living: Three Solutions for your Greatest Problems in Life

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### The Foundation - *The Norms of Life*

Jesus once told a story about a wise man and foolish man who each built a house (Matthew 8). One decided to build on a dried out river bed (the sand); and the other on a spot of hard packed ground (the rock). Each house was built and each looked wonderful when it was completed. Each man was happy with the result. But then came the rainy season and the result changed dramatically. Because it was built on hard packed ground, above the floodplain, even though the rain beat down on it, the foundation held together and after the rainy season had passed, the man's house remained.



The other man's experience was not so fortunate. During the rain, the dried out river bed became flooded and the man's foundation was utterly swept away. His house collapsed. Jesus told this story to illustrate an important truth about life: it's all about the foundation upon which we build our lives.

Every building requires a solid foundation, so every life solution requires one as well.

I'm going to assign a technical term to this and describe it in detail shortly. I call this foundation the "norms" of life. Norms describe the rules we live by. Of course, people don't like that idea of rules for life these days. But everyone knows how necessary they are. Imagine a game of baseball or football with no rules, or a community with no laws. Norms provide the necessary foundation for any building project we pursue. Norms also guide us in addressing the greatest problem of failure: how can I be validated? In psychological terms, it's how we *think* about life. The technical term for this is *cognition*.

Where do norms come from? How do we decide whether they are worth following? Those are all important questions in constructing a solid foundation. Throughout history they have been described in the dominant philosophies and religions of the world.

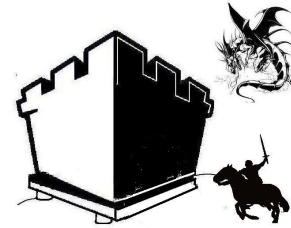


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### Structure – *The Situations of Life*

The structure constructed on top of the foundation is what we usually identify as the building itself. And in life, we are always building on our foundations and norms. These are the “situations” of life. Imagine that you are a knight, riding your horse, being chased by a fire-breathing dragon. Talk about a “situation” of life!



“Situation” means that each person’s building in life is unique and individual depending on their circumstances. My “situation” is different from yours.

Though the number of variables is endless, there are at least three general categories into which all the particular situations fit. We could describe these as three types of “dragons” which everyone is trying to overcome:

- Dragons from the *Past*– includes ancestry, genetics, past decisions and affects us particularly in the area of our *memories*.
- Dragons from the *Present*– The way we process our past situations results in present feelings, motivations and attitudes. The technical term for this is *affections*.
- Dragons of the *Future*– Our affections are not only the result of our past and present situation, they also influence our future situation particularly through our *expectations* and *predictions* about what is coming next can be very frightening.



The way we react to all these variables is driven by our need for pleasure and to overcome the great problem of pain. This process works by the principles of reward and punishment—the proverbial “carrot” and “stick.” The idea of motivating with pain and pleasure is illustrated in the carrot and stick metaphor. A carrot, held out in front of a mule, makes it want to go forward. But a stick on the backend makes it stop.

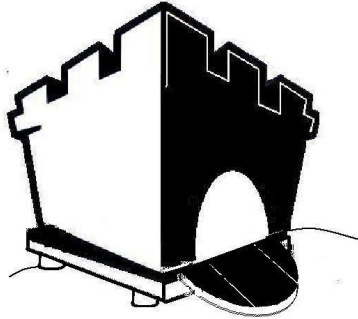
Humans too are wired to avoid the “sticks” (pain/punishment) and pursue the “carrots” (pleasure/reward) of life.

All this results in feelings and affections. Those who give formal expression to their feelings about the situations of life are often called artists or craftsmen. As we study their works, understanding that they represent a “situational solution” to the great problem of pain, we are better able to evaluate the various situational solutions in history.

## Fortress Living: Three Solutions for your Greatest Problems in Life

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### Access – *The Relationships of Life*



A building, especially a castle or fortress, is of little use if there is no way in. This is what we mean by “access.” In the case of a fortress, the access includes a draw bridge, often over a moat. Not only does the bridge allow access to those who belong there, it also keeps the bad people or things out.

We live in a dangerous world! As we confront the various situations of life, there are fire breathing dragons out to get us. We’re like knights being chased by them. No wonder we struggle so much with fear, pain and failure. But we don’t just need a castle. We need a bridge to get into it.

Relationships are that access. Humans are wired biologically for relationships. We cannot live without them. Even for those who view themselves as “loners” are still looking for relationships. They just usually develop the wrong ones. The way we react to relationships determines our *behaviors* in life. Therefore, it is *relationships* to the people, places and things around us, in the midst of the various *situations* of life, based upon our *norms* in life that makes up the entire solution. There are three main types of relationships we pursue:

- Relationships with People – this would include family, friends, even enemies.
- Relationships with Places – included is our nationality, ethnicity, neighborhood or community where we reside, home, job and school.
- Relationships with Things – we spend our lives accumulating, maintaining and disposing of things—shelter, food, clothing, pets, wealth.

The way we interact with people, places and things makes up the substance of our life. There is no way to avoid relationships.

Studying the way people have related to people, places and things in history is what ethics and spirituality is all about.

## **Fortress Living: Three Solutions for your Greatest Problems in Life**

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### **Quiz 2 Questions**

1. A complete framework for solving the greatest problems in life must include
  - a. people, places and things
  - b. past, present and future
  - c. foundation, structure, access
  
2. Every solution consists of
  - a. norms
  - b. situations
  - c. relationships
  - d. none of the above
  - e. all of the above
  
3. Jesus told the story of the two builders to illustrate
  - a. what happens if you build your life on the wrong foundation
  - b. what happens if you build your life using the wrong tools
  - c. what happens if you build your life in the wrong weather
  
4. The way we react to the various situations of life is ultimately driven by our desire for
  - a. money
  - b. friends
  - c. pleasure
  
5. It is \_\_\_\_\_ that give us “access” to the solutions of life
  - a. relationships with people, places and things
  - b. wealth and things
  - c. punishments and rewards