

Ten Places to Start

Written by Alex Baer

Sunday, 08 April 2012 21:40 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 April 2012 21:48

We primates are flukes of evolutionary whims, stumbling experiments with bigger brainpans, still merely monkeys with car keys and credit cards. We are not to take ourselves too seriously, nor be depressed or surprised at any of the routinely dumb monkeyshines or monkey business we perform and pull off in this life.

Really now, a realistic view: Expect nothing of value to occur. Should anything happen to go well, be pleasantly floored, realizing the usual state of our primitive efforts in any regard usually ends in catastrophe and collapse. This is a cautionary prescription for improved mental health, as most primate miseries stem from dashed hopes for better, staggering survivors of crashed expectations. This is less pessimism than a Futilitarian view, which dictionaries describe as the belief that human striving most often is futile. Sounds truthful and downright utilitarian, if you ask me.

Anyone claiming devout connections to the universal grid will preach you a warning list said to be handed down from on high, these top ten guidelines to help us crazed monkeys keep out of our own, and harm's, way. The first three items on that stony list are rocky warnings to take the stone tablets seriously. (This may be where the healthy truism started, to take two tablets, and, call me later, although I would not take that *tableted* tale for, *uh*, granite.)

Ten items: long enough to seem inclusive, short enough that even monkeys could easily keep them in mind, not that we do, of course, the sanctimonious least of all. The Top Ten includes nothing new: *Have no other gods, have no idols, honor the deity's name, honor the worship-and-rest day, honor your parents, do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not lie, do not covet.*

Only the *screechingly* deranged want to play God in real life. I, myself, do not want the role, having already been stressed at playing God in a fourth-grade Christmas pageant, having been made to time a leap of faith, out from behind a slit in a curtain, backstage center, appearing in a giant hop for all mankind, at stage center, finally, and in one line, *Letting there be light*. Understandably, that began and ended a stage career, as no other role is able to hold a candle to playing God.

However, the residue of that role leaves me with a reluctant willingness to start a new chat, one

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regarding what else we might do -- a secular but nonetheless spiritual meditation on what else we monkeys can try in creating some small, heavenly peace on earth. Here is the list: ***Live kindly.***

That's it, end of list. It takes in all manner of behaviors for people, animals, plants, all forms of life. Too exotic, esoteric, or eccentric? Try this one on for size:

Treat every living thing as you yourself want to be treated.

List over, done again, care of The Golden Rule, not so difficult. ☐ Still too vague for you? OK, let's go back to going by the numbers:

1. ☐ Stick to provable facts. Yes, you may believe whatever spiritual hokum you like and soothes you best -- just keep it to yourself, and out of secular society and public policy.

2. ☐ Killing people is not allowed. This means no death penalties, no arbitrary wars of greed and convenience, with mortal, defensive blows allowed only if openly attacked. (We can ease up on this rule the moment we become immortal and able to reverse death.)

3. ☐ Get real. Be authentic, who you really are: you will be happier, and so will everyone else. If you are going to commit to a relationship, commit all the way or get out. In all your human relationships, bring and do honor to them.

4. ☐ Be tolerant. Allow all persons to be, no matter how different from you -- unless they are preaching intentions of harm or about to do harm to you or another.

5. ☐ Be true. Leave be all material goods not your own. Tell the truth in all meaningful ways, adding and subtracting nothing. Be happy with what you have in life, being jealous of none, and always ready to share with others.

6. ☐ Work for the success of all. Do not strive to win at the cruel expense of others. Find a way that all may find a niche of success and share the bounty of life. Help build your own and others' foundations just as strongly and as soundly.

7. ☐ Ensure meaningful work is available for all. No one is asked to be born, yet all here

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must eat to survive. We all arrive with varied skills, so, let us ensure there is ample opportunity for all to apply those individual talents and skills, in order to obtain simple dignity in doing useful work as payment for survival.

8. Wealth may not be passed in endless succession. Let each new generation raise its own crops and do its own work and be rewarded from same, not by accident of birth. Let people decide how best to charitably divide and disperse fortunes at death among immediate family only, and toward the best interests of all people.

9. □ Remove money from politics. Let there be identical sums set aside for each candidate's legitimate campaign uses, given by the people for this task alone. Let the winners be those who spend wisely and well, and no longer be those who can simply outspend all others.

10. □ Let taxation be fair and simply applied. Determine each year the minimum cost to sustain any one person, on average, then, double that number. Below this number, a total of all sources of income, shall be no taxes. From that number upward, let the taxing percentage fairly track closely up with corresponding gains in wealth, the tax being neither penalty nor surrender to accumulating wealth. Let the common good be endowed -- from infrastructure we all use invisibly each day, to providing purposeful relief for those who are in crisis.

That's the list, done once again, third time's the charm -- which used to be an old truism, that the third time something is done, cross your fingers, it's done right. Old certainties die hard, but can sure fade away, just like old expressions, like *Monkey-see, Monkey-do*.

A few more top-ten lists were lazily fished into the boat, with plenty more where these came from, no doubt about that:

<http://thetensuggestions.com/>

http://open.salon.com/blog/tom_cordle/2009/06/14/ten_commandments_updated

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<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/332/the-ten-commandments>