

32963 Article 11-19-09

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A New Investment Strategy

Are you happy? On a scale of one to ten, where is your happiness-meter hovering these days? If you are like most of us, you probably think that your happiness level could use a boost, and you have some ideas about just what would accomplish that rise in happiness for you.

Isn't it true that we are inclined to think that "real" happiness is just right around the corner, but we haven't reached it yet? We think that maybe we'll find greater happiness when this or that occurs. Maybe we'll be truly happy when some life circumstance changes, or we finally acquire something we desire. Happiness is elusive for most of us.

That's why we were especially intrigued by an article published in the *Wall Street Journal* a few years ago by Jonathan Clements entitled "Nine Tips for Investing in Happiness." After reviewing data on happiness from psychologists and economists, he summarized his findings and makes these suggestions. First: Spend more time with friends. Married people and people with close friends are consistently happier than those without these ties. Second: Don't expect happiness to be linked to getting a raise in pay. That only puts you on a treadmill to want yet more. Third: Don't be too quick to trade up in housing and neighborhood. Again, the treadmill of dissatisfaction tends to occur. Fourth: Keep your commute time short. Nothing is so aggravating as a long and unproductive time commuting to and from work. Fifth: Count your blessings. One way to revive happiness is to reflect on previous successes and gifts you have already received. Sixth: Enjoy a good meal. Food can be a simple pleasure. Seventh: Challenge yourself. Lethargy is boring. Eighth: Volunteer for something useful. One of the most rewarding experiences possible is helping others. And ninth: Be patient. Studies show that people tend to grow happier after they pass middle age.

Well, those are interesting suggestions, aren't they? Nine efforts worth trying, in our quest for happiness! Did you notice that not a one of the nine suggestions proposed the key to happiness was in getting more stuff (cars, clothes, houses, gadgets)? Happiness seems to be less related to what we GET, and more related to what we GIVE.

What are you giving of yourself these days? As we look into the teachings of faith, an "investment strategy" for our lives comes into focus. Honor God. Honor your neighbor as yourself. Find ways to give yourself away, and amazingly, you'll find yourself enriched, not materially perhaps, but in ways that truly satisfy and bring joy. So give it a try. And watch that happiness meter start to rise!