

From Dave's Laptop

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

Although Anna's long-awaited appointment at Hopkins got rescheduled, we did redeem the day by going to the Smithsonian's Air & Space Museum Annex by Dulles airport. It was a happy day ☺. Thanks for your prayers and encouragement!

One hundred and fifty years ago today was the final day of the three-day Battle of Gettysburg, a battle that turned the tide of the Civil War. We do well to remember . . . and to be grateful. Here's the text of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered on November 19, 1863, at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg:

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.



"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

"But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."



And of course, it was the day before Independence Day, then, too. You'll remember that the first sentence of the second paragraph of our Declaration of Independence goes like this:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The current issue of TIME magazine examines "the pursuit of happiness" with several articles from which I've abstracted the following points. There were many more I could have included, and these appear simply in alphabetical order:

- A bad job is better than no job: previously out-of-work people are happier even if a new job has poor pay and hours.

- About 80% of young people who say they have a good relationship with their parents are also happier with life in general.
- Adolescents feel better when they have hobbies, play team sports, and go out with friends.
- Couples who live together before getting engaged or tying the knot are more likely to have poor confidence in their union, more negative interactions (like withdrawal) and a greater risk of eventually filing for divorce.
- Degrees don't necessarily make people happier, but money does, and higher education is linked to higher income.
- Gambling is a type of risk taking, which can be exciting. But a landmark 1978 study found lottery winners were no happier and took less pleasure in everyday events.
- Marriage does contribute to bliss; it's a better predictor of happiness than having money or children.
- Nearly half of regular worshippers say they're very happy, compared with 26% of those who seldom or never attend religious services.
- Parents raising kids from the ages of 3-12 are happier than those rearing infants and teens.
- People are happier when they spend money on life experiences—like vacations—than on the latest and greatest products.
- People are happier when they're able to buy necessities.
- People who care about other people's incomes are typically less happy with their lives.
- People who dwell on the past and future are less likely to be happy than people who concentrate on the present.
- People who feel healthy consistently say they're happier than those who don't; and persons who eat unhealthy diets are more likely to be depressed.
- People who volunteer are more satisfied with their lives and are less likely to be depressed.
- Stay-at-home moms are more likely to experience anger and sadness than working moms.
- Studies generally agree that higher income leads to greater well-being, though experts point out that a better predictor is often whether a person is in debt.
- When people lose a job, their sense of well-being plummets, more from the loss of social status and self-esteem than from the lack of income.

Although the Bible does indeed talk about happiness, the Bible makes a distinction between happiness and joy, and talks about joy far more often. Happiness tends to derive from external factors such as beautiful weather, physical health, material pleasures, and congenial circumstances. While there's certainly nothing wrong with these things, joy springs from a deeper well within, a well whose supply can be trusted even when circumstances are less than ideal.

In the selected verses below, notice particularly the affirmation of Habakkuk, who powerfully demonstrates the presence of an internal joy that external circumstances cannot quench:

Nehemiah 8:10

¹⁰ *Do not grieve, for the **joy** of the LORD is your strength."*

Psalms 5:11

¹¹ *But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for **joy**. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may **rejoice** in you.*

Psalms 16:11

¹¹ *You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with **joy** in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Psalms 65:8

⁸ *The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of **joy**.*

Psalm 95:1

¹ Come, let us sing for **joy** to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

Psalm 97:11

¹¹ Light shines on the righteous and **joy** on the upright in heart.

Psalm 100:2

² Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with **joyful** songs.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

¹⁷ Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be **joyful** in God my Savior.

John 15:11

¹¹ I have told you this so that my **joy** may be in you and that your **joy** may be complete.

Romans 15:13

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all **joy** and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

1 Peter 1:8-9

⁸ Though you have not seen [Jesus], you love him; and even though you do not see him now,
you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious **joy**, ⁹ for you are receiving
the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Jude 1:24-25

²⁴ To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious
presence without fault and with great **joy**— ²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty,
power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!
Amen.

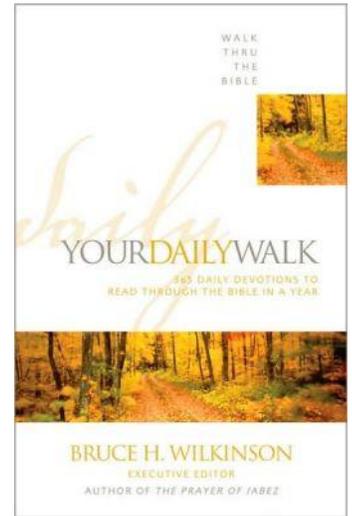
May your holiday be filled with both happiness and joy!

Dave



Postscripts:

- As I prepare for each week's message in our ten-week "Journey through the Bible," I've been reminded that one of the most interesting resources I've ever come across for "getting the big picture" of Scripture is a daily devotional guide from *Walk thru the Bible Ministries* called *Your Daily Walk*. I commend it to you as a resource for your own devotional study.
- If you are Internet-connected and would be willing to be an "Internet Friend" for one of our members not so connected, please let me know. This would involve making sure your Friend gets a copy of this column each week, and at least the main points of the week's INFO and PRAYER lines.



•I'm also looking for folk who would like to become "movie reviewers" from time to time of various film series available on our RightNow Media Library. Your reviews would be published right here in the weekly *Laptop*. Sound like fun?

- **If you're over 18** and worship at CBF, I urge you to plan to attend our Children's Ministry Confab at 7 p.m. on Sunday, July 21. We have some significant challenges and opportunities before us that require the thoughtful and prayerful input from every adult CBFer!



Children's Ministry Confab

July 21, 7 p.m.