



Martin Wolk, chief economics reporter for MSNBC recently reported concerning the relationship between economic prosperity and personal happiness. He affirms that “a growing body of research on the “economics of happiness” proposes that material wealth is overrated.” To substantiate this report he cites an interview study by Dartmouth College that suggests that, as living standards have improved in the USA, the country has, in aggregate, also become more miserable. Studies are showing that one key factor in personal happiness is our relationships, especially a good marriage.

Divine Anticipation

Those of us who believe the Bible would not be surprised at all by such a report. The evidence of the Scripture solidly anticipates the results of this survey. In the first place the first man God created owned the whole world! He was the richest man to ever live; for he had possession of everything and no one with whom to share it. But God said, *“It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18)*. Thus, God from the beginning anticipated the reported truth that the quality of our relationships brings greater happiness than the attainment of material things.

Likewise Jesus on one occasion was urged to arbitrate in a family feud over inheritance money. His reaction was to warn his audience of the perils of covetousness saying, *“for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” (Lk. 12:15)*.

Human Misdirection

Of course, all people need to have their basic needs supplied. We cannot infer from the above truths that the world’s happiest people are unmarried people without jobs; but we can affirm that abundant wealth will not necessarily produce the expected happiness it promises. Yet, in spite of these precedents and warnings, the mass of humanity presses on in the mistaken notion that money will buy happiness, learning all too late that it isn’t true and in the process sacrificing the very things that would have made them happier!

One More Important Factor

So if God is right on these points (and He is!) then we ought to listen to Him for one more important directive. His word teaches us the value of godliness in our lives in addition to contentment. Thus, the apostle Paul affirmed, *“But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment (1 Tim. 6:6).”*

Try God’s Way

When we read such verses we can take two approaches. We can learn from the wisdom of God or we can try to prove that we can do it our way instead of listening to Him, only to learn in the end that we were not the exception to the rule. Why not instead build a life of trust in what God has already lovingly spoken? Experience teaches us that having adequate money for living and a happy marriage relationship may make us happier; but having these things along with a right relationship with the Lord will make us the happiest people of all!

—Johnny Felker (www.truthchasers.com)