

# Eternal Happiness & the '7' Choices

## Happiness Choice #1 Wealth or Poverty

Tom Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza, is a very wealthy man. Fortunately the size of his portfolio is dwarfed by the size of his heart as evidenced by his financial commitment to Ave Maria University. Perhaps his example is evidence that any relationship between wealth and happiness must be measured by how an individual handles what he or she has been given. It doesn't matter whether you are born wealthy or poor. What does matter is what you do with your life. Consider the words from Sirach 13:23. "*Wealth is good when there is no sin; but poverty is evil by the standards of the proud.*" Maybe that's why the choices we make in this world will ultimately determine the choice God makes in the next. Said another way: "*Material abundance without character is the surest way to destruction.*" (Thomas Jefferson)

## Happiness Choice #2 Self or Others

Is it possible to be both selfish and happy? Can a person continually ignore the needs of a neighbor, friend, child, coworker, or stranger while at the same time experience contentment in life? Anyone who believes that happiness has nothing to do with stewardship is at best delaying the sorrow that lies ahead. Maybe that's why the human heart responds better to kindness than it does to coldness. We have a choice to make. We can go through life wanting to be served, or find it in our hearts to serve others. And should we have difficulty deciding which road to take, it may do us well to memorize the words from Matthew 25: 34-40. Perhaps then we will be prepared to stand before God and answer the question: "*But when did I see you Lord?*"

## Happiness Choice #3 Quality or Quantity

So which would you rather experience with God, quality time or quantity time? And if this same God gave you one week to live what would you do with that gift? Would you run to your TV guide and make sure you wouldn't miss any good movies? Would you block out your time to meet with your financial advisor? Would you arrange that last round of golf, throw a party for friends or take that promised vacation? Or would you do something else? If you have trouble imagining how you would spend your final 168 hours put yourself in the mindset of the prisoner on death row, the grandparent who lives alone, the child with no parent to play with, or the spouse with no one to love. As you pursue happiness be sure that every hour is accountable, "*For you know neither the day nor the hour*" (Matthew 25: 13).

## **Happiness Choice #4 Fidelity or Betrayal**

There are nine circles of Hell in Dante's Divine Comedy, each representing greater and greater evil. Three historical characters share residency with Satan: Judas Iscariot, betrayer of Christ, Brutus, the Roman general, and his co-conspirator, Cassius, both of whom were responsible for the assassination of Julius Caesar. These souls paid a heavy price for their infidelity. If only they would have been like Mary Magdalene, who, with the Mother of God, remained at the foot of the cross. Fortunately there have been positive role models in history who understood the relationship between happiness and faithfulness. One lady worth remembering is Helen Keller who said, "*Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.*" And that "purpose" has nothing to do with personal happiness in this life, but everything to do with eternal happiness in the next.

## **Happiness Choice # 5 Conviction or Complacency**

Conviction or complacency, taking a stand or walking away, or having the courage to do what's right, can be challenging. But sooner or later a choice must be made. When was the last time someone's complacency made you happy? Does a person who won't take a position instill a sense of confidence or trust? Do you know any "happy" cowards? And how many people are pleased with today's political process, business climate, educational outcomes, justice system, media coverage, healthcare access, religious environment, or entertainment industry? The author of Revelation 3: 15-16 gives us this warning: "*I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.*" Remember, conviction and complacency have their place in the next world. Which you choose is up to you.

## **Happiness Choice #6 Pride or Proper Pride**

Some years ago I came across a rather interesting phrase that captured my attention. "Proper Pride" may be the antidote for the sin of pride. The former means, "*to multiply in the lives of others those talents we receive from God.*" If we choose to recognize that each of us, regardless of our standing in life, is accountable to do the best we can with what we have been given, are we not doing the work of God? And if our talents are multiplied through the actions of others because of what we did for them, have we not made this world a better place? Is not the reverse also true? If we choose to hoard our money, hide our talent, or not give of our time, what good are we? The choice is ours: we can die rich, or we can die rich in good works.

## **Happiness Choice #7 Forgiveness or Condemnation**

How many times have you whispered the Lord's Prayer? What you probably remember best is the line, "*and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" Let's put this philosophy to the test. Could you forgive a colleague that threw you under the bus; a person whose overtures made you uncomfortable; the brother whose desire for alcohol is an embarrassment to the family; the stranger whose anger is out of control; the "friend" who talks out of two sides of her mouth; the person whose personal gain comes at your personal loss; or the relative who sows seeds of hatred.

Remember, if happiness is your destination, then forgiveness is your passport. Or as an English poet wrote: "*He that cannot forgive others, breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach Heaven; for everyone has need to be forgiven.*" Choose wisely. Your eternity depends on it.

The above excerpts are from David Paul Eich's book, *Happiness, Only in the Next: 7 Choices for Eternal Life*. For information on how to order a copy or his keynote presentations and workshops David may be reached at 517-803-9100 (cell) or [david.eich22@gmail.com](mailto:david.eich22@gmail.com)