

## 1 The Geography of Joy

- In Search of Bliss

## 2 In search of bliss

- In search of how different cultures define and pursue happiness, former NPR foreign correspondent, Eric Weiner—a professed grump, traveled the world in search of bliss.
- Stops on his journey included, Asheville, North Carolina, Iceland, Bhutan, Moldova, Qatar, and India.
- After he was finished with his research, he sat down and wrote a book on his findings entitled, “The Geography of Bliss.”

## 3 In search of bliss

- What Weiner discovered was pretty much consistent with the World Database of Happiness in the Netherlands.
  - Moldova is one of the most unhappiest places on the earth.
  - In fact, what brings Moldavians joy is not what brings other countries joy.
  - In Moldova, what brings people joy is watching their neighbor fail.

## 4 In Search of Bliss

- The top 10 countries for happiness are as follows.
  - Costa Rica
  - Denmark
  - Iceland
  - Switzerland
  - Norway
  - Mexico
  - Finland
  - Sweden
  - Panama
  - Canada
  - United States

## 5 Basic conclusion

- Weiner did, however, come to a few broad conclusions about happiness, but they're not of the sort you can condense into a five-point plan to become happier.
- What's more, most of his conclusions are things you probably already figured out without traveling the world:
- "Money matters, but less than we think and not in the way that we think. Family is important. So are friends. Envy is toxic. So is excessive thinking. Beaches are optional. Trust is not. Neither is gratitude."

- In other words, what makes most people in the world happy is valuing family and friends, and being thankful for what you have.

## 6 Basic conclusion

- “Extroverts are happier than introverts; optimists are happier than pessimists; married people are happier than singles, though people with children are no happier than childless couples.”
- “Republicans are happier than Democrats; people who attend religious services are happier than those who do not; people with college degrees are happier than those without, though people with advanced degrees are less happy than those with just a BA.”

## 7 Basic conclusion

- “Women and men are equally happy, though women have a wider emotional range; having an affair will make you happy but will not compensate for the massive loss of happiness that you will incur when your spouse finds out and leaves you.”
- “People are least happy when they're commuting to work; busy people are happier than those with too little to do; wealthy people are happier than poor ones, but only slightly.”

## 8 Unhappy Places

- While Moldova is one of the unhappiest places in the world.
- There is a place that all cultures and societies agree is even worst. That place is JAIL!
  - Being locked up with little freedom and subject to the abuse of other inmates and guards is definitely not bliss.
  - But this is the exact situation of two of Christianity's greatest missionaries, Paul and Silas.

## 9 The Philippian Jail

- After receiving in a dream the call to preach the Gospel in Europe, Paul and Silas set sail for Macedonia.
- Upon arriving in Philippi—a Roman colony, they find a woman named Lydia—a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, and she becomes their first convert and her house becomes the first church in Europe.
- However, there in the city is a slave girl who has a spirit by which she predicts the future. She earns a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.
- This girl follows Paul . . . , shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” (Acts 16:17 NIV)

## 10 The Philippian Jail

- Paul finally becomes so annoyed by this woman that he turns around and says to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit leaves her. (Acts 16:18 NIV)
- Once the owners of this slave girls realize that their means of making money is gone, they drag Paul and Silas into the marketplace and accuses them of being trouble makers.
- The authorities arrest Paul and Silas, severely flogging them and throw them into the inner cells of the local jail and have Barney Fifetos to keep a close eye on them.
- However, instead of having a “pity party,” Paul and Silas have a church service and sing hymns to the Lord.

## 11 Song

- After long and careful research, I have discovered the hymn Paul and Silas sang.
  - If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands  
If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands  
If you’re happy and you know it, then your life will surely show it,  
If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands
  - Additional verses: ...stomp your feet..., ...nod your head..., ...shout hooray..., ...do all four...
- No doubt it was the stomping of the feet, the nodding of the head, and the shouts of hooray that caused the earthquake. Well . . . .
- Another possibility, it was the faith and the attitude of Paul and Silas, who were thankful for being counted worthy to suffer for the gospel.

## 12 Situational awareness

- The point is, in this place that was specifically designed to make its residents unhappy, Paul and Silas weren't wailing tunes of despair.
- Neither were they chanting about the injustice of their punishment.
- Instead they were letting faith be their guide and like the other apostles and servants of the gospel, knew that trials, persecution and imprisonment weren't the end of the world.
- Moreover, they knew that persecution was an honor for authentic faith and that trials were necessary so that they could exercise their faith and keep it strong.

## 13 Rejoice

- They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. (Acts 5:40–41 NIV)

- “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12 NIV)
- “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. (Luke 6:23 NIV)
- Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. (James 1:2-3 NIV)

## 14 Faith & Joy

- The Bible says a lot about "joy" in the lives of those who try to serve God and follow Jesus.
- But as we read, the Bible carefully, we begin to understand that joy in the biblical sense is something different from happiness, though the two often coincide.
- What's more, the Bible isn't commanding us to feel joy. It's not telling us to notify our faces or any other parts of our anatomies about it. Nor is the Bible telling us about joy to induce guilt when we don't experience it.
- Rather, joy is what life looks like when we really trust God and believe he is a rewarder of those who serve him.

## 15 Peanuts

- In one of Charles Schultz's early Peanuts comic strips, Lucy is waxing philosophically. "Why do you think we're put on Earth, Charlie Brown?" she asks.
- After pondering this for a moment, Charlie replies: "To make others happy."
- Lucy seems to think so too, but then a scowl darkens her brow. "I don't think I'm making anyone very happy," she admits. "Of course, nobody's making me very happy either."
- In the final panel, Lucy's screaming out in big, capital letters:
- "SOMEBODY'S NOT DOING HIS JOB!"

## 16 Happiness study

- In his book, Weiner tells of a study conducted by psychologists at the Kobe College in Japan.
- They divided a group of college students into two sets, asking the first set to do nothing different from usual for a week.
- They asked the other set to count the number of kind acts they performed during that week.
- They weren't asked to perform any kind acts, but simply to take note of them.

- At the end of the week, the second set reported a noticeable increase in happiness levels compared to the control group.

## 17 C.S. Lewis

- The very definition of joy, according to C.S. Lewis, is that it is unexpected.
- Lewis entitles his autobiography, Surprised by Joy. That's because his personal journey to Christianity was a journey away from aimless pleasure-seeking and towards joy.
- We must learn to let go of our fears that pleasure is all there is, and learn to trust God to give us those gifts of joy that come to us so unexpectedly . . .

## 18 The Joy of the Lord

- How many have heard the phrase in Nehemiah, where it says, the joy of the Lord is our strength?
- How many understand the context?
- Ezra the scribe was reading the Book of the Law to the people and upon hearing it the people were mourning and weeping as they now understood the source of their troubles.
- However, they were told by Nehemiah to stop and instead of mourning be thankful.
- Why? Because God was showing them how to have his favor, love, goodness, and joy, which is their glory and their strength.

## 19 Conclusion

- So where is the most joyous place on the earth?
- It is found, anywhere where people choose to do God's will.
- However, this hidden manna is not for everyone.
- It is only given to people who understand that like peace, joy is the byproduct of serving God.
- So if you are waiting for someone to make you happy, you might wait for a long time.
- But if you serve the Lord with gladness—knowing that he is a rewarder of those who follow him, He will give you his joy abundantly.
- And knowing God is pleased with us is what makes us strong. Nothing can keep us down, not even living in a jail, visiting Moldova, or hanging out with Lucy.

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