

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

Contact Dr. Frantz on the web at www.mlcchurch.com

Are you happy with your life? Imagine, you’re on a huge, Boeing 767 jet airliner, in mid-flight, and suddenly the pilot comes on the speaker system announcing that the jumbo jet’s massive engines have abruptly stopped and you’ll be making an emergency landing.

Whoa! A thousand thoughts flash through your mind.

As it turns out, due to human error, the plane has run out of fuel. Some mix-up with the grounds crew at the airport of departure. Fortunately, no one is injured and you’re able to land safely.

So, here’s the scenario: we have a multi-million dollar airplane, heading in the right direction, with all of the most advanced technology guiding its flight, but running out of fuel.

Isn’t that a metaphor for life? We’re sailing through life; things seem to be going well. We have the nice home, reliable transportation, a job that we like, wonderful family and friends ... and yet, one day we run out of fuel.

We can’t explain it, but there’s a throbbing emptiness within rooted in a yearning to somehow be connected to something more.

The emptiness prompts in us the feeling, *What’s it all about? Where am I going with my life? Am I happy? Am I fulfilled? Am I living a life of meaning and purpose?*

Connected—to something bigger than ourselves. Again and again, the core teachings of the Bible invite us to *work for the good of all*, to never *grow weary of doing what is right*, and to live lives punctuated with *self-denial* and *sacrificial love*.

These values *are* the essence of love. They are at the center of God’s will for every human being.

Interestingly enough, according to research conducted by the Gallup Poll, 12% of Americans are *high spiritual-commitment* people. By *high spiritual-commitment*, they mean folks who take seriously the spiritual values of *self-denial* and *sacrificial love*.

Going on, Gallup says that the members of this group (these 12%) have some notable characteristics in common:

To begin with, they are *happier*. Also, their families are stronger and more resilient. More still, they tend to be more tolerant of people of different races and religions. And finally, they’re more community minded, with clear commitments to goals and purposes

beyond themselves.

In other words, when we *work for the good of all*, approaching life everyday with a spirit of *self-denial* and *sacrificial love*, we're happier as human beings. We're more fulfilled. Our lives have more meaning and purpose.

If we think about it, this is a compelling affirmation!

What this Gallup poll suggests is that when we're running on empty, perhaps more than anything, we need to reaffirm our connectedness to the *big picture*, to something larger than ourselves.

Happiness comes from meaningful connections. When we're feeling down, when stress is fraying our nerves, both at work and at home, what our spirit needs is for us to take a deep breath and find a way to reach out to someone in need. The cure to the doldrums, to the malaise that at times rises up in our spirit, are acts of *self-denial* and *sacrificial love*.

These deeds of generosity and caring feed our spirit. They *literally* give us new life and new energy, along with a good feeling from within. And at the end of the day, they make us happier human beings.

The *good news* about happiness is that it is born out of a social context. It rises up from our relations with one another. We're not truly happy (not in the *big picture* sense), apart from the world, clutching to our worldly riches. Rather, happiness comes when we're connected to one another in ways that enrich the spirit and *lift up the common good*.