



WANTS TO BUY A TICKET

Echoes of Grace

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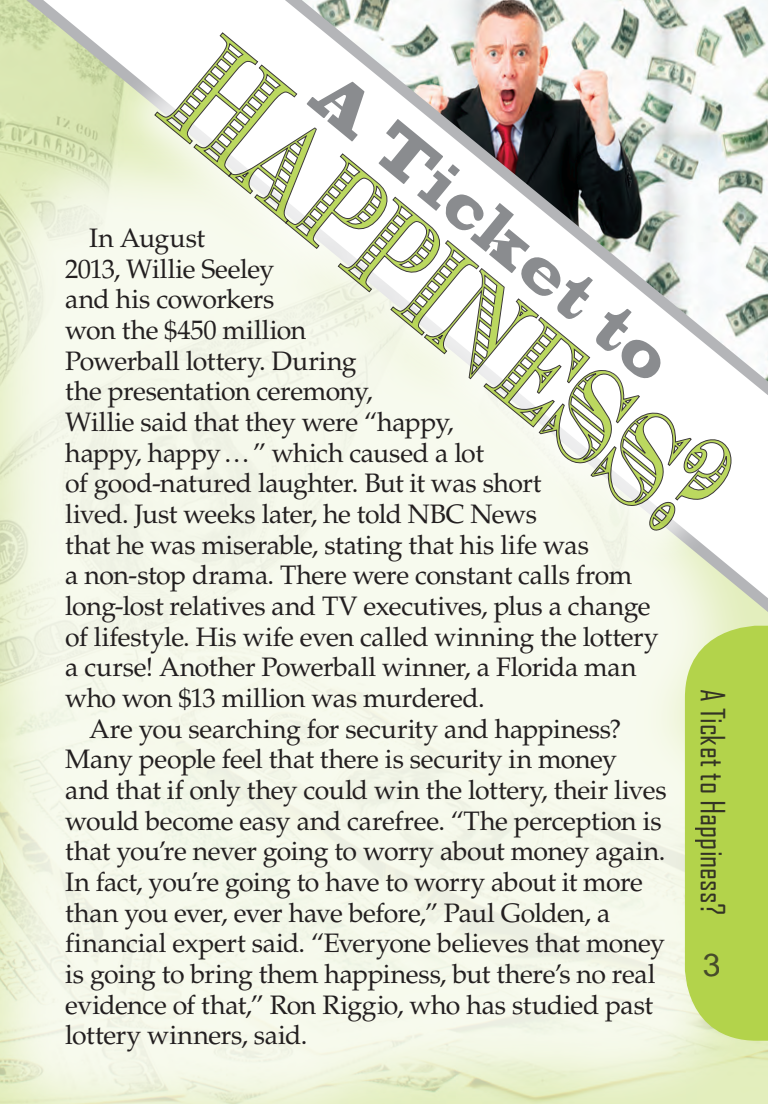
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A Ticket to Happiness?

In August 2013, Willie Seeley and his coworkers won the \$450 million Powerball lottery. During the presentation ceremony, Willie said that they were “happy, happy, happy ...” which caused a lot of good-natured laughter. But it was short lived. Just weeks later, he told NBC News that he was miserable, stating that his life was a non-stop drama. There were constant calls from long-lost relatives and TV executives, plus a change of lifestyle. His wife even called winning the lottery a curse! Another Powerball winner, a Florida man who won \$13 million was murdered.

Are you searching for security and happiness? Many people feel that there is security in money and that if only they could win the lottery, their lives would become easy and carefree. “The perception is that you’re never going to worry about money again. In fact, you’re going to have to worry about it more than you ever, ever have before,” Paul Golden, a financial expert said. “Everyone believes that money is going to bring them happiness, but there’s no real evidence of that,” Ron Riggio, who has studied past lottery winners, said.



Most people are giddy with happiness after winning the lottery. However, they are unprepared to handle the responsibility of finances or the emotional challenges and strain on relationships that can

come with it. Such was the case with Alex Toth and his wife. In 1990, he won \$13 million and opted for 20 yearly payments of \$666,666. At first, they intended to live quiet, normal lives, but after years of poverty, the pull of all of that money was too great. After years of living the high life, it was revealed that the couple had filed false income tax returns and had also filed for bankruptcy. Now in poor health, at 59 years of age, Mr. Toth checked himself into a mental facility. He died penniless at age 60 before the tax evasion case could go to trial. When asked about the money, his wife said, "It caused us to lose a lot of friends, some family members," and "sometimes I wish we could give it back."

William Post, another lottery winner of \$16.2 million, made the statement: "Everybody dreams of winning money, but nobody realizes the nightmares that come out of the woodwork." He too ended up losing it all after wild spending and lavish living. Along with the wild spending and lavish living came a



brother who hired a hit man to kill him and his sixth wife, a former landlord who sued him for a third of the jackpot (and won), and a host of financial debt because of over-spending. "I was much happier when I was broke," he concluded.

Hunting for Happiness

There is a story in the Bible of a young man who thought that money, wealth and possessions could give him happiness.

One day he came to his father and asked him to give him his inheritance. A few days later, he went into **"a far country"** and **"there wasted his substance with riotous living."** I am sure that he had many friends to help him spend his money and possessions. At first he was happy—very happy indeed! Life was good to him, as long as he had his wealth and money and could spend it in any way he wanted. But all was not well; we are told that he **"spent all."** He also lost all of his friends. Now he was all alone, and things were about to get even worse, for we are told that a severe famine gripped the land. In order to survive, he took a job feeding pigs. All alone, with no one to help him and so desperate for food that he wanted to eat the husks given to the pigs, he finally **"came to himself."** This means that he repented, for he said to himself, **"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."** And so it was

"Everybody dreams of winning money, but nobody realizes the nightmares that come out of the woodwork."



that he made the long journey back to his father. After confession was made and communion was restored between father and son, a feast was prepared where **“they began to be merry.”** You can read this wonderful story for yourself in Luke 15.

These people thought that winning a lot of money would bring them happiness, but they were soon disappointed. They did not understand where true happiness comes from. The Bible, God’s Word, tells us with absolute certainty how we can be happy. The first thing that we must do is to accept the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. First John 1:9 says, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** Once we accept the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, He wants us to obey Him and to live in communion with Him. As we behave in a way that pleases Him, we have **“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding”** (Philippians 4:7). When we trust Him as our Saviour, He also gives us the Holy Spirit, which energizes us to live for Him. Some of the fruits of God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within us are joy, peace and love (Galatians 5:22). The true Christian who pleases the Lord in his life can experience **“a well of water springing up into everlasting life”** (John 4:14). True joy and happiness comes from within when we give our hearts and lives over to the Lord Jesus. Will you come to Him today?

It’s not just chasing the big bucks that causes problems. In *An Old Crime Exposed* you’ll find that even “little” money matters can come back to haunt us. ◀

AN OLD CRIME EXPOSED

How would you feel if you were fired from your job for something that you did many years ago? That is exactly what happened to Richard Eggers, who was 68 years old and had been working as a customer service representative for Wells Fargo Home Mortgage for seven years. When the company ran his fingerprints and did a background check, they discovered that he had a previous conviction for fraud. When he was 19 years old, he had tried to use a cardboard dime in a laundromat machine for a free load of wash. Not only did his cardboard dime fail to work, but the sheriff walked in the door and caught him red-handed. He was convicted and ended up serving two days in jail. "It was a stupid stunt. I'm not proud of it, but I don't think that it warrants a termination almost a half a century later," Mr. Eggers said.

Another employee who worked for the same bank, Yolanda Quesada, who was 58 years old at the time,





was also fired. When a background check was run, it was discovered that she had a conviction for shoplifting clothes from a department store as a teenager. Even though she had paid the required \$50.00 fine at the time, she was still fired over the incident. "I think there's more important things in life than something that I did 40 years ago," she told local ABC affiliate KLTU.

These two people were not alone. Thousands of others were fired at the same time. Because of the global financial crisis in 2007, new rules were implemented banning banks from employing anyone with a prior conviction having to do with breach of trust, dishonesty or money laundering. Failure to follow these new rules could result in a banking institution being fined up to \$1 million a day. Instead of making exceptions in certain cases, the banks played it safe and fired anyone with a previous conviction of a crime.

Our Lives in Review

Neither Richard Eggers nor Yolanda Quezada ever imagined that these old crimes would ever be brought up again. Yet God's Word tells us, **"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"** (Romans 14:12). Those of us who do know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ where our lives will be reviewed and what is done for Him will be

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rewarded. Those who do not know the Lord as their Saviour will stand before God at the Great White Throne where they will be judged according to the sins that they have committed.

What a solemn, terrible scene that will be! Here is how God's Word describes it: **"I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"** (Revelation 20:11-15).

Richard Eggers did not feel that something he had done 49 years ago was a fair and just reason to fire him. After all, he had already paid for his crime, and so had Yolanda Quesada.

With the help of a lawyer, he appealed through the FDIC waiver system and won his case. Because of sin, there is much injustice in this world,



and many acts of cruelty, violence and unfairness are committed. But the Bible tells us of One who is always just and fair and cannot sin. **“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”** (Genesis 18:25). Because God loved us, He sent His only Son to die and shed His blood on Calvary’s cross. This means that the Lord Jesus has paid the penalty for our sins. God, who cannot lie, makes this promise: **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from**



all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). When we receive God’s free gift of salvation, we have this beautiful promise: **“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions [sins] from us”** (Psalm 103:12). We can now enter into God’s holy presence without fear of condemnation — fear of being judged for our sins. Oh! please do not reject God’s free gift of salvation or you will have to stand before God at the Great White Throne in all of your sins and be judged for every one of them. It will not matter how small or harmless or trivial or unimportant they seemed to you — God is just, and you will have to suffer the eternal consequences of being in your sins when you meet Him. Why not receive His Son as your Lord and Saviour now while it is not too late?

Money troubles have been around for a long time, as you’ll be reminded in *Banned*. ◀

BANNED



In 1919, eight members of the Chicago White Sox baseball team were banned for life from the major leagues because they allegedly took bribes to throw the final game of the World Series. The commissioner in charge wanted to do everything in his power to prevent such an incident from ever staining the reputation of the league again. Banning the players sent a strong message that such behavior would not be tolerated.

Many people feel the commissioner was right to place a ban on these players. After all, he was charged with protecting the integrity of the organization. Have you ever considered that God is the “Great Commissioner” of the universe who will deal out justice to every member of the human race?

At some future moment, each one of us will have to stand before Him and give an account of



our lives. Romans 14:12 reads, **“Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”** If our actions, thoughts and words agreed with His righteousness, He would welcome us into heaven. The problem is we have fallen short: **“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”**

(Romans 3:23). We have all committed acts that are full of malice, disorder and weakness—acts which are despicable in His sight. The stain of those sins on our record will effectively keep us out of heaven. Because of our sins, we have incurred the debt of eternal punishment.

The commissioner of the sports league banned certain players for life for their serious misconduct. However, God will ban all those who remain in their sins from His presence for all eternity! Therefore, the truth that you have sinned is the most serious problem you will face in this life.

What We All Need

It is because of the problem of sin that we all need the Saviour. It is only through faith in Christ that a lost sinner can be saved. To wash away the stain of sin from the men and women He created, He let Himself be nailed to Calvary’s cross where

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His blood was shed. Because He is the Son of God, His blood can wash away the stain of sin from every soul that trusts in Him so that he or she is whiter than snow.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be

as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

When Christ died on the cross, He paid sin’s penalty for all those who would afterwards believe. Isaiah 53:5 reads: **“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.”** While one sin is able to sink a sinner to hell if he or she rejects the Saviour, a million sins will not keep a sinner out of heaven if he or she repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The time to turn to God is right now in this life!



When this short life is over, it will be forever too late to set things right.

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”

When this short life is over, it will be forever too late to set things right. **“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures”** (1 Corinthians 15:3). Even if you have lived all your life at a distance from Him, you can still do an about-face on the road of life and come to the Saviour to receive the gift of eternal life. **“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life”** (Romans 6:23).

The God of grace invites lost sinners to come to Him and be saved. Banned from heaven doesn't have to be anyone's portion. In a certain sense, people ban themselves from heaven by refusing God's grace and offer of salvation. Don't be someone who does such irreparable, irreversible and everlasting damage to themselves. Instead, come to the Lord Jesus for salvation. ◀



Every one of us shall give
account of himself to

God.

Romans 14:12

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*“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save
that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).*

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