

“Satisfaction with life” Thursday, May 9 6:50 AM

INTERVIEW WITH JAY OSTROWSKI: By Rusty Rabon, WMHK

1. A recent Barna Research Group study discovered that terrorism, war and recession notwithstanding, 4 out of 5 adults in America are “mostly satisfied” with their life. When these adults did identify a problem, “...the most common difficulties related to finances (28%), health (19%), career concerns (16%) and parenting struggles (11%). *Does that mean we’re living the “good life” in America these days? Why are finances a greater concern than health?*

The definition of “good” is debatable. I think the majority of people –Christian and Non-Christian are living self-pleasuring lives –not necessarily fulfilling lives. This was clear when many re-evaluated their lives after 9/11 and found them rather empty. For many the soberness of 9/11 has worn off and we are back to our self-pleasuring ways. What is Mostly-satisfying them are temporary things –consumable pleasure seeking –amusement parks, movies, going out to eat – instead of quality time with family, pursuing a worthwhile cause, becoming part of something bigger than themselves, serving others, following the will of God.

2. A recent study conducted by the Barna Research Group found that finances, health, career concerns and parenting struggles are the most common life “difficulties” that people face. Of those, men were more concerned about with career options, while women listed parenting issues and personal health as their primary concerns. *What is it about men and women that make us concerned about different things? Are there some implications here for husbands and wives as they work to understand one another and build their marriage relationship?*

These are traditional roles of males and females, and actually other reports have show that women are more concerned about career advancement than in the past. Women also more often are concerned with relationships and parenting than most men. These are generalizations and more DESCRIPTIVE than PRESCRIPTIVE –mostly conditioned. Traditionally Men are terrible are more apt to eat red meat and not be concerned with personal health and women are more apt to look after the health of themselves and the whole family.

3. I find it interesting that adults surveyed by the Barna Research Group “...were much more likely to identify one or more national issues that concern them than they were to list personal concerns...The national issues of greatest concern were the war and related fears about terrorism (52%), economic issues such as the strength of the economy, taxes and the cost of living (30%), the moral decline of the nation (19%), unemployment and job issues (15%), and national security (14%). Issues identified less frequently included dissatisfaction with government performance (9%), education (8%), poverty (6%), racism (5%) and health care (4%).” But Barna says that, while the major issues of concern used to be education, crime, drug abuse and foreign aide, “...our more recent issues of choice tend to reflect national conditions that have very personal impact.” *Why the change? Are we becoming a more self-centered people? Shouldn’t Christians especially be concerned with poverty or racism or other issues that relate to the welfare of others?*

The cost of living and the economy are significant not because people will lose jobs so much as not be able to do pleasurable things. This does reflect a change in the Christian community to a more individual sense of religion instead of focusing on serving one another and caring for the needy. Americans are more apt to leave that to the government or to a big church than to reach out themselves to one in need down the street – and they are missing a blessing from giving.

4. In this study conducted by the Barna Research Group, about 20% of the people listed moral decline as their top issue. But the particular issues of concern are interesting. The things most on people’s minds are substance abuse, crime, violence, spiritual decay, loss of family values, and a “general discomfort” with the moral climate. “Five particular issues – homosexuality, abortion, cloning, child abuse and pornography – were each listed by less than one-half of one percent of the public as being serious national issues.” *Yet these five issues seem to be “hot button” issues in the news these days. Why the discrepancy?*

I am afraid that the Christian American public has given in on these issues and seen them as inevitably allowed in America. This partly comes from a post-modern mindset of Christina where All realities are deemed equal. While many Christians do not personally endorse these issue they do shy away from taking a stand for fear of looking intolerant.

5. There’s one more item in this Barna Research Group study that I found very interesting. He says that the findings show that the gap between people of various interest groups has greatly diminished. The difference of opinion between Republicans and Democrats, conservative and liberals, ‘born again’ Christians and non ‘born again’ adults is much smaller than it was 25 years ago. *When a person comes to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and begins a relationship with Him, all of our problems are not solved and all of our struggles don’t come to an end. But shouldn’t there be a significant difference between the concerns that believers and non-believers have?*

What we should see as is evidence of a heart change. That our behavior matches the concerns that GOD has for America and the nations. Like that song we play with the line “that what breaks your heart, breaks mine too.” Our actions and stances should align with God’s priorities. This is when we will have the most life-satisfaction.

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