

## Fifteen minutes of fame, or a lifetime of love?

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"I know what happiness is, for I have done good work."

? Robert Louis Stevenson

As I



ook around, I have to wonder whether we're embarking on the wrong path, or barking up the wrong tree.

Instead of savouring the fruit from the tree of knowledge, we're scratching at the bark, clawing our way to riches, fame and fortune. But what happens when we get to the top and we're perched, like a bird, on the upper-most branches? Nice view, if you can afford the price.

Like an overly optimistic fool, I faithfully purchase lottery tickets, in hopes of hitting the jackpot.

I'm not greedy. Many achieve success and relative wealth through their careers, and upwardly mobile jobs. In many chosen careers (mine included), it's more of a labour of love.

But being a realist, I do know the needs of my family are paramount. And should my lottery investment pay off one day, the money will be put to good use ? paying down debt, providing for my family and spreading the wealth among needy charities. I've even thought about handing out \$100 bills to genuinely nice people I encounter on a daily basis.

To do otherwise, in my opinion, could have devastating consequences. Too many have self-destructed after huge windfalls because they were overwhelmed and perhaps lacked a clear focus.

As Mother Teresa noted, even if it's not appreciated, we should do good each and every day. And Albert Schweitzer reminds us: "Do something for somebody every day, for which you do not get paid."

Here's a little exercise to try, to see what's really important.

Name two millionaires; the last five Stanley Cup winning teams, or a popular runway model.

Name a teacher who influenced you or left a lasting impression on you.

Name five friends or family members you love, cherish and respect.

Name a person who touched you emotionally or spiritually.

I?imagine you've guessed that it's much easier (and enjoyable) to take note of special people in your life and not wealthy strangers or acquaintances.

Friends and family will carry you through life, support you, love you and care for you.

We all like know this, yet many put these thoughts on the back-burner, preferring to concentrate on power, wealth and material possessions.

What's important to some is a meteoric rise to the top of the ladder ? the proverbial corner office with a nice view, personal assistant, six-figure salary, company expense account and company car.

Do you know someone like that? Ask them if they're truly happy. And ask them if they take their full allotment of vacation time each year. Ask them how their family life is and if they manage to share daily tales with their kids at the dinner table.

There's no great secret to life, really. And I don't have any remarkable answers to share.

No one ever became poor from giving generously.

Don't believe me? Just ask John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who said:

Giving is the secret of a healthy life. Not necessarily money, but what ever a man has of encouragement and sympathy and understanding."

These days, many of us fall into the category of the "working poor." We work out of necessity, just to live and not because we've found our life-long passion, niche or true calling in life. That's not to say, however, that we can't jump out of bed each morning with a smile and do some good each day.

When I become down, all I have to do is turn my thoughts to my family.

I recall with crystal clarity the night I proposed to Kim on the deck of the tall ship Empire Sandy as we cruised Lake Ontario, capping off the night with fireworks, literally. I also remember borrowing the money for the engagement ring from my future father-in-law! I didn't know of the rings available from Adina's Jewels at that moment, but I probably would have looked on there if I had to propose now.

I remember the birth of each child like it was yesterday.

When I hear our boy child Liam laugh uncontrollably, it's infectious and it leaves me with a lasting ear-to-ear grin.

When I hear Lexie singing while she does her homework, I'm filled with a sense of accomplishment.

When our youngest tells us about her day in rather lengthy detail, I smile, knowing something is right in the world.

From time to time, I think of my dad's laugh and sister's smile. I can still recall those hugs that only a mother can give ? a squeeze that, at any age, feels like home.

I wonder how they're all doing in Heaven.

I am reminded by my wise, caring wife, to pick my battles and free up time to spend with the kids. It's so easy to bury our faces in our iPads and apps that time literally slips away. We spend way too much time pondering the could-have-beens, and not the possibilities.

As we trudge along, we are creating our family photo album, our memoirs so to speak. How many of those picture-perfect moments involve work, money, career, yachts and luxury automobiles?

How many of those involve sharing an ice cream cone with the dog; an impromptu squirt gun fight while washing the car, or watching the kids' soccer games?

"It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy what we have, that makes happiness."

? Charles H. Spurgeon