

THE CHASE FOR HAPPINESS

People are buying tickets in droves in hope of winning the growing lottery jackpot. ABC reports that jackpots are getting so big that billboards in Texas – where things are always big – and around the country have to advertise the price as \$999 million because they're not built to show billions.

The way the lottery is growing in America, they may need to build new billboards for future drawings. Camila Domonoske, a reporter on National Public Radio's news desk, said that Americans spent \$70 billion on the lottery in 2014, the most recent year for which data is available, according to the North American Association of State and Provincial Lotteries.



CNN Money calculates that's more than Americans spend on sports tickets, books, video games, movie theaters and recorded music combined. NASA's budget estimate for 2017, for comparison, is about \$19 billion.

It's clear that Americans are chasing a dream, and they are willing to spend a lot of money to catch it. But there's a problem, and it's not just the 1 in 292 million odds of ending up with the winning ticket. Recent history has taught us that just because someone becomes instantly rich doesn't mean they'll end up with any greater sense of happiness.

A famous 1978 study found that major lottery winners were no happier than ordinary folks, and actually got less joy from daily activities. A 2008 Dutch study found winning the lottery doesn't make a household happier. But two studies out of England suggest that it is possible to win the lottery and be content – but only eventually. And it might take longer and longer to find contentment the larger your win is.

Despite the high expectations, winning the lottery doesn't solve our interpersonal problems, but will probably make things worse as friends and relatives clamor for their piece of the prize. Neither will it result in a greater sense of happiness as we suddenly have so much more wealth to worry about protecting, investing, etc.

Although most will never have the chance to find out how they would do with untold wealth, that doesn't mean there isn't a lesson here for the rest of us. The reality is many people live with the expectation that the next big thing – a promotion, the next good turn of fortune – will finally bring them the contentment and happiness that has eluded them so far.

The transcendent, immune-to-life's-assault happiness we all search for can't be purchased or won, but is the byproduct of faith – the result of possessing spiritual riches. Those come with a faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it (Proverbs 10:22 NKJV).