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Discussions of Interest to Immigrants

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Faith Lutheran Church

Seeking Passion for Life

*“Welcome one
another as
Christ welcomed
you, for the
Glory of God.”*

Romans 15:7

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Introduction

Our passion for life has a direct effect on our quality of life. Cultural forces drive many people toward passionate pursuits that seem important but are not always beneficial to them and their families. In this essay we discuss our passions and where they can lead us. We also discuss evaluating our passions to determine what is really important to us.

Passion

What is passion? Passion can be a powerful emotion, such as love, joy, hatred, or anger. In this article, we consider the definition of passion as enthusiasm.

Good Passion

Many people have passions that are sources of delight and long-term happiness for themselves and those around them. People can have passion for their jobs. Quite often this benefits those people and others in their lives. Work should be joyful as well as monetarily rewarding.

Hobbies can provide relaxation and satisfaction for those who pursue them. Often, hobbies can present challenges that allow people to develop feelings of proficiency that result in satisfaction. Examples might include outdoor activities such as skiing, hiking, hunting, fishing, golf, baseball, or indoor activities such as basketball, bowl-

ing or dancing. People may be just spectators or actively participate. In either case, people can have passion for the activity. Some hobbies may be more sedentary, such as reading, playing cards or playing chess. Unless people become overly obsessed, hobbies are quite healthy if they provide a balance to other activities.

The key thought here is “balance.” Most healthy people may have one or two things they are especially passionate about, but they usually balance them with other interests. Quite often people become immersed in particular hobbies or work or other activities, then eventually move on to other pursuits. Or, people may have activities they indulge in intensely, and then drop for a while, then pick up again. Such behavior is generally healthy. Many people have become successful because they have had passion for what they are doing, whether it is related to work or a hobby. Often, making money has been incidental to what they wanted to achieve, but has become part of the reward.

Passion for relationships is especially healthy. Most people require companionship of others to help complete their lives. Sometimes passions can include helping other people fulfill their lives, which in turn gives fulfillment to those who give help.

Unhealthy Passion

The darker side of passion is experienced when people become obsessed at the expense of almost everything else in their life. Quite often money is involved. Also,

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desires to impress others can be drivers.

Pursuit of better living standards is not necessarily bad. Most people want to live the best lives they can. This often includes having material things like a larger house, newer cars, new furniture or other possessions and better education for their children. However, for many people

money is often a measurement of success and while they pursue more money to achieve these things, they lose sight of what may be more important. Sometimes possessions can possess their possessor. Often people become so focused on monetary achievement that they do not care about others and do not contribute to their community.

The dark side of passion can affect people in many ways. Some who are highly educated spend so much time working that they have little time to relax and enjoy leisure. They endure many hours on the job; they work extra time on weekends; they give up time with their families. Success becomes an endless treadmill.

For those who are not so highly educated and lack opportunities for high-paid employment, they may work two or three jobs. Even though this causes them physical distress, they persist. One job may provide them an adequate living, but they want to make more money to be able to buy the material things that society constantly parades before them. Yet, the time they spend working detracts from time with family.

For others, passions can take the form of extra-marital affairs, illegal drugs, gambling or eating. These people feel that the temporary satisfaction of their hedonism is a worthy goal even though it causes them harm. The end result for any of the above is that a healthy passion for life is not attained.

Causes of Unhealthy Passion

Most people have a desire to be accepted by those around them. Some try to demonstrate their success by talking about the “good life” they have. For them materialism is evidence of the good life. However, if they are immersed in a community of people whose values are based on material possessions, they can lose sight of spiritual values. The people in their community encourage one another to demonstrate success by showing off their possessions. Material possessions are not bad if the possessors can enjoy them without letting them become the dominating focus of their lives. Sometimes people expose themselves to great financial risk by buying housing they cannot afford. They may have to give up necessities to pay for their housing. If the wage-earner of a family is laid off, disaster can befall the family.

People working more than one job may have no time for quiet reflection and thought. Passion for life fades because they spend all their time working and no time playing. All around them they see material signs of “success” without realizing that true success comes from inner peace.

Those who suffer from addictions are trying to escape from problems of life. Many immigrants come to the United States to seek a good life, yet they do not understand what a good life is. They make great sacrifices and leave much of their identity behind when they come here. Once they are here, they feel they do not really fit into society and their life often becomes empty, meaningless, and filled with despair. Relationships become difficult to manage.

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By keeping themselves busy with activity, people may not have to face their grief, losses, emptiness, anxiety, guilt, discouragement and loneliness. By boasting about material possessions, they try to make themselves feel better. By gambling, taking drugs, having affairs or pursuing other unhealthy activities, they try to escape the emptiness of their hearts and fill the vacuum with something they think will bring them comfort.

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Remedies

The costs of unhealthy passions include damage to

our bodies, relationships, and spirit. Additionally, society is negatively impacted. Evaluating passions sometimes requires people to distinguish the difference between fun and happiness. Fun often provides momentary pleasure; however, true happiness is often attained by making hard choices that may cause some temporary discomfort, but offer feelings of achievement. Perhaps a way to evaluate if our actions provide momentary joy or long-term happiness is to ask ourselves if we still feel good about what we have done the next day, the next month, and the next year. In some cases, such as for those who work too hard, neither short-term fun nor long-term happiness may result.

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greater overall passion for life.

The late coach of the Dallas Cowboys football team, Tom Landry, said, "Discipline makes people do what they do not want to do in order that they become what they want to be."

America is one of the richest countries in the world. Yet, many Americans require anti-depressant drugs. Sometimes

people in poorer countries are happier because they are richer in spirit. Occasionally, we may need to look inward and ask ourselves if our passions are really propelling us toward long-term happiness and satisfaction. If we reflect on what we are doing, we may want to ask God for help to do what is right. In Philippians 4:13, Paul tells us "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (All Bible references are from the New International Version.)

If God is absent from our lives, we may limit our ability to achieve our potential for satisfaction and happiness. Sometimes trials in our lives may give us opportunities to improve ourselves and reward us with greater passion for life. In James 1:2-4, we read "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Having a relationship with God, feeling His presence and enjoying Him, can help us fulfill our passion for life and guide us toward happiness and satisfaction. God is the Creator who gave us our lives. He desires

that we enjoy passion for others, the world around us and Him. Our passion for life can be enhanced from serving God by serving others.

Conclusions

Passions that drive us can be good or bad. We can look at our lives to determine if the passions are taking us toward happiness and satisfaction, and we can ask God for guidance. The answers we get from God may come in the form of better ability to evaluate our actions and where they are leading us. Then we can make necessary changes. The changes might include surrounding ourselves with others who can offer emotional and spiritual support and share healthy passions.

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*Faithful people,
raising up people of Faith*

If you wish opportunities to further explore what has been discussed here or additional topics of interest to immigrants and others, you might like to contact Rainbow Zeng at the address above.

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About Faith Lutheran Church:

Faith Lutheran Church is a caring people, who support one another's spiritual growth and who reach out to the community with Christ's love.

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