

A Matter of Perspective

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I heard a story recently that a man was being marched to his execution. The gallows had been erected about a mile outside of the city. A cold rain fell as the hangman led him outside of the city walls. He slogged through the mud and said, “I don’t think things can get any worse than this. I’m chilled to the bone, I’m wet, I can hardly lift my feet through the mud and I’m going to be hung.” The executioner replied, “You think you’ve got it bad? I’ve got to walk back in this mess.”

I know a lot of people like the executioner. No matter how bad someone else has it, they seem to have it even worse. In fact, if they don’t have it worse, they won’t be content until they make it that way. No matter how good or how bad they have it, they tend to take a dim, dismal outlook on life.

Several years ago, my wife and I were stationed in Hawaii. We lived in a tropical paradise. It was beautiful weather year round and we never lacked for something to do to entertain ourselves. We enjoyed watching football games, concerts, shopping, more luau’s than we could count, and saw a great many things from our military history. We had the opportunity to travel very cheaply to the other islands and saw an active volcano.

We thought it was very strange when we heard other people complain about Hawaii. True, some people experienced Island Fever and had difficulty adjusting to living on an island, but some people had just made up their minds that they were going to be miserable. They would complain about being bored. They would complain about the food. They even complained that they didn’t have Wal-Mart. We looked around and saw all of the wonderful things around us and couldn’t believe that someone could possibly be unhappy.

Certainly it was an adjustment to be stationed some place where our families could not drive to us. It was also an adjustment to living in a new culture. But we felt like the benefits we enjoyed far outweighed the disadvantages. In fact, we had made a conscious decision when we joined the Navy that wherever God and the Navy sent us, we were going to enjoy ourselves.

I think it all comes down to our decision to either enjoy life or be unhappy. I heard someone say recently that someone had told him that life really stunk. The other person replied that it may stink, but it sure beats the alternative. We make the choice of whether we are going to enjoy our lives or simply endure them.

The Psalmist says in Psalm 118: 24, “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (NIV). In fact, the context of the verse comes after recounting the hardships that Israel has endured. It is a song of praise that says that no matter how bad things have gotten, God is faithful to sustain us. It reminds us that we should always be thankful for life and enjoy it, even when we have to endure hardships like living in Hawaii.

I hope you will see your life as a gift from God to be enjoyed, rather than just unhappily going through life. Take on a perspective of thanksgiving. Everyone around you will appreciate it.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.