



# Michelle's Musings

*On life, loss, health, homesteading, real estate and more*

Wow, a new year is here already! I regret that I didn't get a newsletter out in December. I hope you all had a wonderful holiday. I am so excited for this new year and all that the Lord will do!

## **A Tragedy, A Bucket List, and Selfish Giving**

*How I Found the Happiness Trifecta*

Recently at my weekly Christian Business Leader's meeting, **I met a woman whose 21 year old son passed away** this past June. I immediately gave her a long hug and let her know I was also a part of this 'club' that nobody would ever choose to join. We had a sweet, but rushed, talk before the meeting started about our respective sons and our lives since they died, and I discovered that **her full-time occupation is helping people fulfill their bucket list items!** She organizes everything from parachute jumps to safaris. What a joyful occupation!

That started me thinking about the many people I know either personally or by reputation who have dedicated their lives to serving others in the wake of a personal tragedy. My personal experience has been very much like that, so I began googling to read others' stories. What I discovered was **literally dozens and dozens of charities with the same origin story: person experienced tragedy, person dedicated life to helping others.**

## **Why does this happen so frequently?**

I believe a large part of the answer lies in the fact that **our Creator has made us with the drive to give.** It is so rewarding to give and to help others, because it is congruent with our nature. And, since we are wonderfully made in the image of our Creator, when we give of ourselves – time, love, money, we are rewarded with what psychologists have dubbed, "The Happiness Trifecta".

**The Happiness Trifecta** is a remarkable trio of hormones - dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin.

The amazing thing about these 3 hormones is that if a person is deficient in any one of them, they will feel 'off'. When we are deficient in all 3 of them, we become depressed, have no drive, and often experience disrupted sleep.

**Do you know that little rush you get** when a you receive a text, Instagram, Facebook, or other social message? That's caused by dopamine. **Dopamine** is also released when playing video games, drinking alcohol, or taking certain drugs (thus the nickname 'dope') Dopamine makes us feel 'driven', excited, and, *momentarily*, happy. That's because the effects of dopamine only last for a few seconds or minutes, at most.

But unless dopamine is balanced with **serotonin**, we

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feel the constant nervous drive to keep pursuing more of that 'rush', which is why all of the above activities (social media, gaming, alcohol, drugs) can be very addictive. Serotonin, as opposed to dopamine, is like burning a log instead of paper – it creates a slow burn, **a deep sense of satisfaction**. We feel the effects of serotonin when we check off something on our to-do list; concentrate deeply to create art, writing, or music from the heart; and when we help others.

And **oxytocin** – well, the effects of this neurotransmitter can be summed up in its nicknames: **“the love hormone”, “the cuddle hormone”, and “nature’s marijuana.”** **If you want a dose of oxytocin, give a long hug!** Both the giver and receiver of hugs will receive a burst of this feel-good hormone. I have a friend who is sought out for his “9-second hugs” – people actually line up at networking events for those hugs!

**Back to my story** - I mentioned earlier people dedicating themselves to helping others in the wake of a tragedy. One compelling example of this is **Robert Rogers**, who in 2003 was driving home with his wife Melissa and their four young children when a flash flood swept their minivan off a Kansas highway. As their vehicle filled with water, Roger struggled to break a window and pull his wife and children to safety. When he succeeded in breaking the window, he and Melissa and their oldest daughter were instantly sucked through the window and into the raging water when the pressure inside their vehicle changed.

#### **Robert was the only survivor.**

In the now 15 years since, Robert has dedicated himself to sharing his testimony with others through speaking and music and also to a unique charity project – establishing an orphanage in honor of each of his family members who passed that day. He reached that goal in 2012, and has gone on to establish two more. In spite of his horrific loss, Robert will be the first to tell you that **his life is one of joy and fulfillment**. (I highly encourage you to listen to his youtube testimonials - they are so inspiring!)

There is another very different group of people that has experienced the incredible benefits of helping others, and that is the wealthy individuals who participate in *The Secret Millionaire*. **The Secret Millionaire** is a reality television show in which millionaires go incognito into impoverished

communities and agree to give away tens of thousands of pounds. In one episode, British millionaire James Benamor says, “When I started this, I really didn’t understand about volunteering. I didn’t understand why people do it. I didn’t understand that some people just did it **to feel that excitement of having done something for others**. My attitude has completely changed. Now, I see volunteering as really something everyone should do.”

That has certainly been my experience the last 6 months since our son died – writing this newsletter and caring for my family and clients has helped me tremendously. And then there was the trip to Florida...

In late September, I attended a real estate conference in Florida. It was very hard, initially. It was my first time to make a business trip without my son Nathan as my sidekick in many years.

But once I started speaking with the other attendees, things started looking up. For the first time, EVER, a real estate conference where we didn’t talk about ‘leads’, ‘client acquisition’, or ‘best cold-calling scripts’.

*“In spite of his loss, Robert will be the first to tell you that his life is one of joy and fulfillment.”*

Basically, I discovered a group of **Happiness Tri-fecta ‘junkies’**. Instead of being focused on money, every one of these guys and gals feels called to be their best, to serve their clients to the highest degree that they can, and

to give back to their communities as much as they can. We discussed how we can help local business owners tell their stories and obtain more business; we talked about how we can be the driving force to bring local business owners and entrepreneurs together to give to the community in a way that is impactful; and we talked about how to improve our documented approach to selling and buying houses in a way that will yield the most benefit to our clients, who trust us. The entire focus was on helping others instead of making more sales.

**This ‘business conference’ ended up being a healing balm to my soul.**

**What does all this have to do with you?** Well, I know that many of you reading this already practice a life of service. But sometimes we can fall into a cycle of feeling depressed, lonely, down, or simply just not happy. In those times, we will get a burst of “happiness hormones”

when we do something, anything, to help others. It can be as seemingly small as sending a homemade note with a verse (that's you, S. C.!), or as large as traveling to Houston to assist hurricane victims.

I really don't know how to wrap this up without sounding preachy. I'll just say, **we all want to be happy and if you are not happy, helping someone else will get you on that path.** And once you start to experience those Happiness Hormones that result from giving of yourself to others, you aren't going to want to stop! When we pull on reserves from deep within to step out of ourselves and care for others, we are rewarded many times over, and want to keep on giving and giving, because we are receiving so much ourselves.

**Wishing you a very happy 2018! Make it so.**

### **Bibliography:**

- (1) The Blue Zones of Happiness: Lessons from the World's Happiest People
- (2) The Secret Millionaire – James Benamor [https://youtu.be/s\\_Gizl7R224](https://youtu.be/s_Gizl7R224)
- (3) The ministry of Robert Rogers <https://www.mightyintheland.com/>

## **The Story Behind**

### **...My New Book – A Documented Approach: Value vs. Price, A Warren Buffet Approach to Selling a Home**

This book is a result of years of research and collaboration by a mastermind of real estate agents including myself who were determined to develop a standard method, a documented approach, to selling a house that would yield consistently superior results.

The result of that research is this book: The Value-Driven Approach to Sell Real Estate, How to Sell Your House the Warren Buffet Way. And no – the Warren Buffet way is not 'buy and hold'.



**Buffet's #1 rule is "Avoid Fundamental Mistakes".** That's our rule in selling homes, also. The fundamental mistakes that we have

seen home sellers make repeatedly over the years are outlined in the book.

Find out more by emailing me at the following address:

[Michelle@FreeBook4Charity.org](mailto:Michelle@FreeBook4Charity.org) or request your free copy by visiting [www.FreeBook4Charity.org](http://www.FreeBook4Charity.org). (I'm giving the book away; all I ask is that you 'pay the gift' forward by donating \$5 to a charity of your choice.)

## **Introducing the Leander-Liberty Hill Advice Givers Podcast**

Having spent the year of 2016 experiencing and studying the inner workings of Amazon.com, I am now even more disappointed with corporate giants. For everyone except maybe the customer, the atmosphere is cutthroat and there is the constant feeling that employees, suppliers, and third-party sellers are quite dispensable. (I believe those on the receiving end of one of our local large tech companies notorious for its annual Thanksgiving 'pink slips' would agree with me!) On the flipside, small, locally owned businesses make up 99.7 percent of U.S. employer firms (1), and their employees report much higher overall job satisfaction (2).

**I meet regularly with local small business owners and hear their stories, their passion, and the reasons why they chose to do what they do.** There is so much to learn from so many of them! For years, when my husband c.b. or I met business owners, we often interviewed them with one or more of our children in attendance. To us, this is an integral part of our children's homeschool education.

We decided that we want to capture this wisdom and make it available to others so we can all be inspired and benefit from their years of experience. That is the driving thought behind our new podcast "Leander-Liberty Hill Advice-Givers". The focus of the podcast will be on showcasing incredible people - local business owners, entrepreneurs and thought leaders - and the lessons we can learn from them.

My husband and I will be hosting these to contribute to our community - there will be no charge, so spread the word to business owners, charities, and community leaders who may like to be interviewed.

(1) [https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/FAQ\\_Sept\\_2012.pdf](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/FAQ_Sept_2012.pdf)



(2) <https://techtalk.gfi.com/survey-81-of-small-business-employees-are-satisfied-with-their-jobs-info-graphic/>

## ... and also the “Wine from the Vine” Podcast



**A few months ago, my 3 boys and I drove to Nashville, TN to view the total eclipse. I felt like we all needed to get out of the house and away for a little while – the**

last 6 weeks had been so emotionally exhausting, and tempers were getting short among the boys. So 2 days before the eclipse, I took off driving to Tennessee with our 3 boys, and c.b. stayed home with Madison (we thought everyone would be happier if we weren't traveling with a toddler for 30+ hours!)

*“indescribably motivating and encouraging...”*

**The result of that trip was more than I could have asked for** – we stayed with church connections along the way who began as strangers and became dear friends. **Their testimonies, their experiences of Christ in the most difficult of human experiences, strengthened and encouraged my family so much!** The newlyweds in their 70's, who had each previously lost a spouse – what a precious testimony of the Lord's life and provision! The brother who was involved in a horrific car accident but was miraculously saved several times. His testimony in particular was strangely helpful to me, because it underlined again

to me that the Lord is absolutely in control, that it is He and He alone who chooses when it is time for us to leave our earthly bodies.

There is something indescribably motivating and encouraging about hearing other's trials and how they made it through them by the grace of the Lord. Hearing others share their experience of Christ through their tribulations allows us to be comforted by the comfort of Christ that others have already experienced. (2 Corinthians 1:4)

The sweet, deep, rich experiences shared by these believers in Christ stood **in stark contrast** to what I read on the grief forums that I visited after our son Nathan died. Some of the people posting were completely hopeless and felt life was not worth living anymore after losing a loved one. Others quoted religious doctrine, but it was hollow. For example, “I know God has a reason, but I don't know what it is.” My heart ached for them. **I don't think I could have survived our hardship last year without a deep, personal walk with the Lord and His constant speaking of grace into our hearts.**

So the idea was sparked to record the testimonies of believers and share them with others for the encouragement of many – whether Christians already or not. And we will soon begin doing so. The podcast will be called “Wine from the Vine”. (Thank you, M.S., for the name!)

c.b. has spent the last six weeks researching, purchasing, and testing the equipment, and we plan to record our first interviews for both podcasts in January.

We trust the Lord will supply the time, energy, and finances for us to produce both of these podcasts.

We are very excited and happy to launch them!



**Thank you** for taking the time to read my newsletter! I hope you enjoy spending this time with me. Please, contact me with your ideas, feedback, questions, or just to say hi!

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