

Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

Congratulations! You Didn't Win!

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America was firmly in the grip of Lotto Fever in late October. The combined jackpots of two popular games topped \$2 billion. But most of the attention was on an estimated \$1.5 billion jackpot in one of the games. Ultimately it was won by a single ticket sold in South Carolina (of course taking the cash option yields a paltry \$913 million). One winner means millions and millions of losers. At least that's the way many people likely felt as they tossed their tickets after the drawing. Christ-followers who chose to buy a ticket (or tickets) shouldn't feel that way. In fact, they should be ecstatic. Why?

The answer is simple – God knows what you need and when you need it to complete His perfect plan for you. Full disclosure – I bought one \$2 ticket for the \$1.5 billion. I assured God that if we won, Ramona and I would keep only enough to maintain the lifestyle we have and would commit the rest to the creation of a foundation dedicated to directly serving Him. How could God not love that plan? Again, an easy answer – *it's not His plan. it's our plan.* And it's hardly unique. How many people tell themselves – “Well sure, I'd really like to serve God more completely, but I have to work. If I just won the lottery, then I could dedicate my life to Him.” God's plan isn't for us to wait around for Him to make it easy for us. His plan is to serve him as fully as we can with what He has already given us – *His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.* 2 Peter 1:3

As Pastor Tim put it in a recent message at Oakbrook; Jesus plus nothing equals everything. I would follow that up with Jesus minus \$1.5 billion equals everything.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of His holy people in the kingdom of light. Colossians 1:9-12

A book I read a while back, *The Surrendered Life* by James H. McConkey, asks an important question – “When you were saved, you got all of Christ; but did He get all of you?” He wants all of you, right now; just as you are. Whether you are rich or poor in earthly terms, there is one thing you can be sure of – all of Christ is all you need! And a worthless lottery ticket is a great reminder of that. So, congratulations! You didn't win! But you still have all of Jesus. So make it your goal to give Him all of you today. He considers that gift priceless!