

The Happiest Place on Earth?

January 3, 2012



Disneyland has long positioned itself as “The Happiest Place on Earth.” And Disney goes to great lengths to maintain that illusion. Their parks are as close to spotless as you can get; you never see wrappers, gum or spilled popcorn on the ground, since they get swept up within a minute of hitting the pavement by an army of “cast members,” from custodians to ride workers, who are devoted to maintaining the fantasy. Every Disney park cast member is trained to be assertively friendly in making things right and keeping people happy. When a friend’s child lost the ice cream scoop from his cone, within moments a Disney person replaced it for free.

Recently I met a couple of Disney reps who were exhibiting at a convention. In talking about the company policy of propagating the illusion of “the happiest place on earth,” they told me that every employee is drilled with the four keys to their success: Safety, Courtesy, Efficiency, and Show. Keep everyone safe, be unfailingly kind and courteous to every guest, “git ‘er done,” and be show-ready and show-perfect at all times. Both of these ladies’ faces lit up as they talked about Disney values and how much they enjoyed their part in keeping the fantasy going.

This resonates with me. When my husband and I visited Disneyland not long after we were married, it was the best day of my life—even better than our wedding day! I never enjoyed myself so much as I did that day, and Disney’s unflagging efforts to keep their park the happiest place on earth was the reason why. So I get it.

What I get even more is why it’s so successful, and why it’s so important.

Disney’s desire to provide a great experience and make people happy touches one of our most basic—and universal—heart desires: to return to Eden. We long for perfection. We long to experience no pain and no need. We long to be completely immersed in an ocean of love and affection. We long for what is wrong to be set right. We long for evil to be banished and for good to rule the day.

We long for intimacy with our Creator. And many of us don’t even know that’s what we’re longing for, but I believe that’s what’s at the heart of all addictions.

All these things we had in Eden, and we lost in Eden. But the story’s not over, and God has promised to make everything right. Our longings WILL be fulfilled one day.

In the meantime, we can visit Disneyland or Disneyworld. They will pass away, God’s word says, but the real reality of what we’re longing for will come to pass (read the end of Revelation). Count on it.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/the_happiest_place_on_earth