

# Black (and Blue) Friday

“It was like the running of the bulls in Spain!” My wife told me with a voice that was quivering. Her eyes appeared to be bugging out of her head and her hands were shaking. I thought to myself, *is she describing a fight; an accident; a natural disaster of biblical proportions?!* No, what she was describing in horribly descriptive detail was...a sale...at the Wal-mart several years ago...at 5 a.m.—that’s right, a.m.—the day after Thanksgiving! She was there at 4:45—and the parking lot was already packed!

She braved bleary-eyed, sleep-deprived, caffeine-crazed, frothy-mouthed shoppers—some of which probably had been planning their Friday shopping blowout down to the last aisle and item in intricate detail. Like someone planning a bank heist.

Now, before you begin to judge my wife, I need to give you a little background; first, let’s talk about our finances. We are a one-income family and money is tight! I mean *tight!!!* Conversely, the money that she saved was phenomenal! Secondly, my wife did it because she loves her family and that’s why she subjected herself to this craziness. I’m thankful for my wife’s love for both her family and for her unwavering focus on being a good steward of our money, *but...in the end...it’s just stuff!* My wife was not happy that I told her that! In fact, I don’t really remember what happened next—maybe several years of intense therapy may begin to make the details more clear, but really, who has the money and the time for that?!



## “Black Friday Death Count”

Anyhow, several years ago I saw a bumper sticker on a car that read “The person who dies with the most toys wins!” But the real-life bumper sticker should read “The person who dies with the most toys...still dies!” We live in a world that is absolutely hollow! It’s like a beautiful chocolate Easter bunny. Sweet to eat for a bit, but in the end, hollow, leaving us with a bad taste in our mouths and leaving us wanting. But wanting for what? I’ll come back to this thought in a minute.

According to the website “Black Friday Death Count,” there have been a total of 12 deaths and 117 injuries. [\[i\]](#) Trevor Wheelwright [\[ii\]](#) noted that the five states that are at highest risk for Black Friday violence are (in order of most to least violent):

1. Arkansas
2. Tennessee
3. West Virginia
4. North Carolina

## 5. Alabama

An article I saw on [cnn.com](http://cnn.com)<sup>[iii]</sup> titled: “Wal-mart death preventable, union says” states, “Jdimytai Damour, 34, was crushed as he and other employees attempted to unlock the doors of a Long Island, New York, store at 5 a.m. Friday, police said.” By the way, this was not the same Wal-mart my wife was at. The article goes on to report “At the Wal-Mart, police say that a line began forming at 9 p.m. Thursday and that, by 5 a.m. Friday, there were as many as 2,000 customers outside. A video showed about a dozen people knocked to the ground as the doors were opened and the crowd surged, breaking the doors. Minutes later, police trying to give Damour first aid were jostled by customers still running into the store, authorities said.”

### **A Hole in the Soul**

Does any of this sound awfully bizarre to you?! It should: a person died because people wanted stuff! Why are we so focused on stuff? Is it that important? I contend that the stuff isn't that important, but *it's the hole that the stuff is trying to fill* that is so important. You see, each one of us has been created by God with a hole in our soul—an indescribable need for an intimate relationship with him that nothing will ever fill...nothing but God.

According to the website, *beliefnet*, “. . . 52 percent of people used retail therapy to improve a sour mood. Buying a new item or going to a thrift store can help with mild depression.”<sup>[iv]</sup>

So why does this happen? *The Atlantic's* Derek Thompson explains:

The dark side of materialism as a tonic is that shopping bags aren't a great replacement for friendships. Loneliness can make us materialistic. Feeling isolated makes us anxious, which makes us less likely to get up the energy to make and maintain connections that would make us feel less alone.

### **Retail Therapy**



So, in the hunt for immediate pleasure, some people turn to shopping. But medicating our loneliness at the mall can make us lonelier, over time [called “The Loneliness Loop”], as shoppers begin to learn that it is challenging to form a meaningful relationship with a wristwatch or brag about one's children to a porcelain vase.<sup>[v]</sup>

Kate McCoy, of the website, *Biblical Woman*, reports that compulsive shopping is more common among women than men and that such compulsions come from a core lack of fulfillment.<sup>[vi]</sup> Another way to describe a lack of fulfillment is a lack of *feeling- full-ment*.

So after learning this information about not feeling full, there are only two questions that you have to ask yourself (and hopefully answer correctly):

1. Am I looking for stuff to fill that hole in my soul that only God can fill?
2. If I am, what do I need to do about it to fill it with the right thing: God?

## **A Wise Guy's Insights**

In regards to the first question, which by the way is a timeless and crucial issue for everybody who's ever lived, is living, and who will ever live. The wisest man that ever lived spent his entire life searching for meaning and satisfaction without God. To his frustration—but to our benefit—he wrote everything down in his diary and we have it in the form of the Old Testament Biblical book called *Ecclesiastes*.

You remember Solomon don't you? He was the one who wrote many of the proverbs in the book of Proverbs. How do you think he got so smart? Well, he screwed up a *lot*...and he wrote it all down! All right everybody, all together in one, two, three "Thanks Solomon, you're the man," well technically, "you're the King."

In twelve short chapters in the book of *Ecclesiastes*, Solomon drops the wisdom bomb! He doesn't mince words or mess around. He's straight to the point about his ups and downs and you and I can greatly benefit from it. If you haven't read it, don't wait another minute. I challenge you to read it today. I know you'll learn a lot from it.

### **"Vanity, Vanity, All Is Vanity"**

Solomon rants and raves for 12 chapters about all his getting and all his stuff. At one point we find out that he got literally anything and everything he wanted...can you imagine that. That is incomprehensible to me! This is what he wrote:

I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces.

I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man's heart. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun (*Ecclesiastes 2: 4-11, NIV*).

### **Savior, not Stuff**

In the end Solomon admits that the only way to be happy and satisfied is to ". . . fear God [worship Him with awe-filled reverence, knowing that He is almighty God] and keep His commandments, for this applies to every

person. For God will bring every act to judgment, every hidden *and* secret thing, whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12: 13, 14, AMP).

So there you have it. The sad, sordid tale of one man's—correction: of all mankind's— search for satisfaction, fulfillment, peace, and joy. Solomon said it straight: if you want to be happy, if you want to have peace, joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in life, then acknowledge and respect God and obey what He says! The only true and lasting freedom, joy, and peace are found in Him. The Apostle Paul said it this way in the New Testament Biblical book of Acts: "in Him we live and love and have our being."

## **It's All about Importance**

Back to my original statement: "It's just stuff." Stuff is okay—as long as you recognize that's that is all it is: *stuff!* Nothing, not stuff, not knowledge, not even earthly relationships—as important as they are—can replace the most important thing (Who, by the way isn't a "thing"): God! Hey, as stuff goes, the stuff I'm getting this year is pretty cool, but the coolest thing in the world is something you can't buy in a store. It's a daily close and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ as not only my Savior, but my Lord as well.

Take a look at what the Bible says about stuff and what will ultimately happen to it:

*"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming."*

(2 Peter 3:10-12, NIV)

## **What's Really Free**

Did you catch that?! It's *all* going to burn up. All our collective stuff will one day be gone...and the only thing we'll have left is the only thing I—and you—really ever needed in the first place—Salvation: perfect peace and fellowship with God. I hope you have salvation, but if you don't it's really easy to get it. Salvation is the only free gift that *really is free*; not just for this season, but for forever! It cost Jesus a whole lot to give it to you: it cost Him His life!

If you accepted God's free gift of salvation today, write me and let me know, I'd love to rejoice with you and strongly encourage you to read Matthew 6:25-33 about how a relationship with God will provide you everything you will ever need.

Have a happy holiday season, a great Thanksgiving, and a merry Christmas. Enjoy your Christmas gifts (in moderation) and for goodness sake, be careful when you're shopping, I've heard it can be a real contact sport!

## **Works Cited**

[i] Downloaded on November 24, 2019 from <http://blackfridaydeathcount.com>

[ii] Downloaded on November 24, 2019 from

<https://www.reviews.org/trends/high-risk-states-for-black-friday-violence/>

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[v] Downloaded on November 24, 2019 from  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/08/the-loneliness-loop-why-feeling-sad-makes-us-shop-and-shopping-makes-us-sad/278443/>

[vi] Downloaded on November 24, 2019 from  
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