

The Heart in Pilgrimage*

George Herbert – living a full life

*The title of the article is taken from George Herbert's poem 'Prayer'

David Parish suggests that the life of George Herbert gives an inspiring answer to how we might feel happier at work, a state of mind now recognised as producing higher productivity, low staff turnover and greater profitability. Herbert's combination of traditional Christian virtues with practical down-to-earth Christianity is an example of how it can be done.

What does it mean to live well? It's a question frequently discussed in business publications like the *Harvard Business Review*, and some companies employ 'Happiness Directors' to assist their enquiry. To evaluate what makes staff feel happier, Google have developed an algorithm based on a range of data, from the length of lunch queue times to patterns of maternity leave. Through thousands of interviews and data sets Gallup have created a research methodology to study how companies can best engage with their employees. Called 'The Engaged Workplace' it is now being made

available to companies and organisations.

For the individual there are always existential questions: how do I get the most out of the life I have? How do I best use the gifts and abilities I have? And faced with an increasingly flexible and challenging workplace; how do I put those gifts to best use in my work?

George Herbert, Welshman, poet, writer and pastor, may have some of the answers.

I first came across the poetry of George Herbert in an English class at school and was struck by the way it

was beautifully crafted and possessed a deep practicality of thought and application. Recently I read a new and revised edition of his poems which included his prose work, *The Country Parson*. Herbert wrote the book as a practical guide to being a better pastor. Reading *The Country Parson*, along with a biography of Herbert, I found a person who had worked through what it means to live well.

Herbert was born in Monmouth in 1593 to a well-off family. His father was a Member of Parliament and related to the Earls of Pembroke. His father died when he was three and the family moved to London, where



The Engaged Workplace: graphic from the Customer Experience Community website