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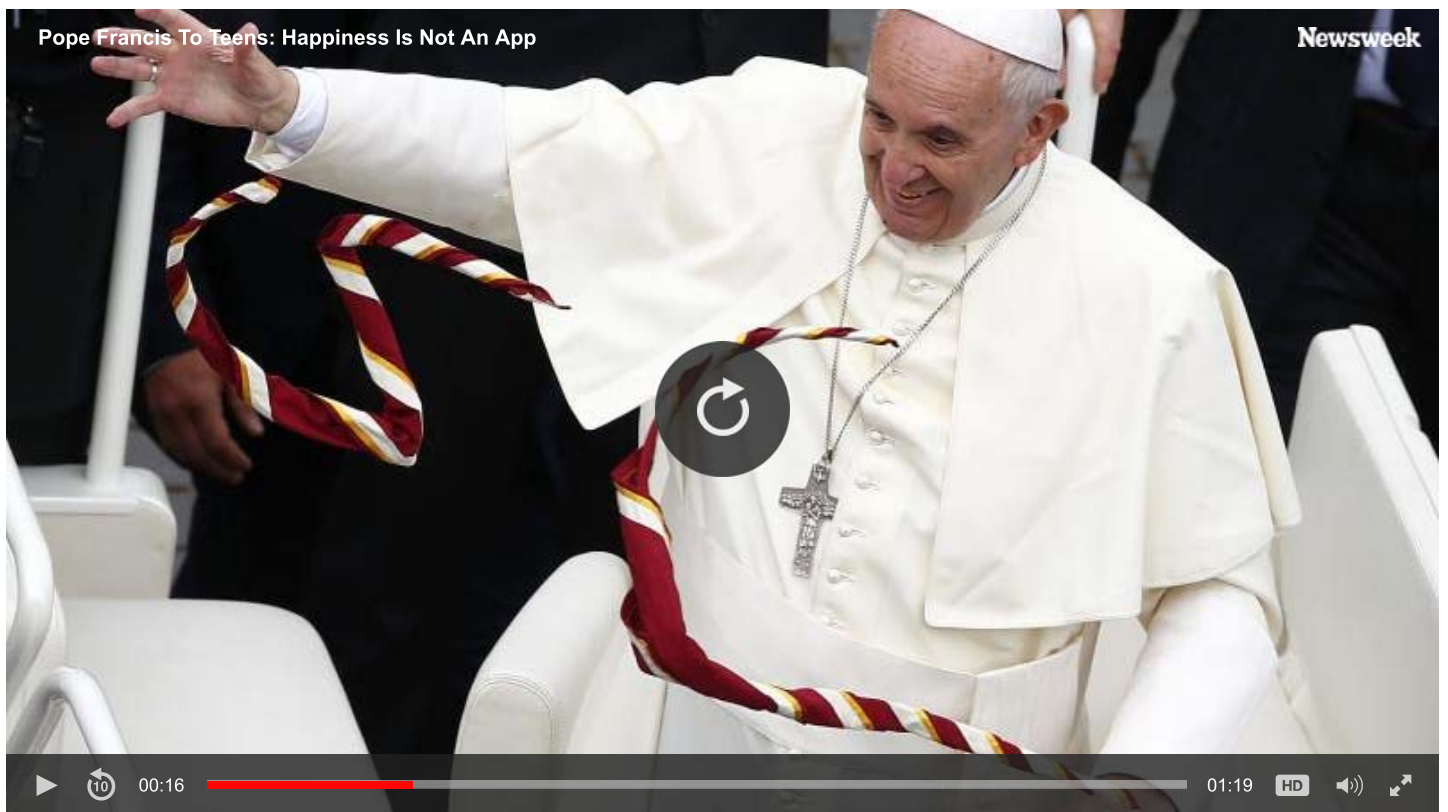
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TECH & SCIENCE

HOW TO BE HAPPY: VOLUNTEER AND STAY MARRIED, NEW U.S. STUDY SHOWS

BY **MELISSA MATTHEWS** ON 9/12/17 AT 8:10 AM



Pope Francis To Teens: Happiness Is Not An App

Newsweek

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Happiness is one of those hard-to-define, “I know it when I see it” (or in this case, feel it) notions. But that nebulousness doesn’t stop countless books, studies and articles from offering up clear directions on how to achieve this state of mind. In the latest quest for happiness, personal finance website WalletHub examined which states have the most content residents and which factors contributed to emotional health, such as wealth and marriage.

According to their findings, Minnesota is not only the land of 10,000 lakes but it’s also the land of happy people, outranking the other 49 states. So, what’s the key to their bliss?

WalletHub found that the state appears to have fewer divorced families than most other states (Utah, North Dakota and New Jersey take the top three spots on the list of lowest divorce rate), and a community of altruistic residents. Minnesota ranks number three on the list of highest volunteer rates; Utah and South Dakota place one and two, respectively. Minnesotans also enjoy a good night’s rest, just behind Colorado and South Dakota for regions that have the highest adequate sleep rate.

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Somewhat surprisingly, Minnesota did not appear on WalletHub’s two areas tied to monetary happiness: lowest long-term unemployment rate and highest income growth. However, this finding doesn’t imply that money never leads to happiness. Rather, it reinforces previous research showing that we don’t need as much money as we think (or want).

“Struggling financially can definitely impair happiness, but after a certain point, the amount of money someone has doesn’t impact happiness much at all,” said Kimberly Daubman, associate professor of psychology at Bucknell University, on the [WalletHub site](#). Daubman refers to a [2010 study](#) by economist Angus Deaton, who was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2015, indicating a \$75,000 annual household income as the sweet spot.

This new study indicates that rather than focusing on your personal wealth, which isn’t always a quick fix, your time might be better spent building up your network.

“The most important ingredient to a happy (and long) life is to have strong social relationships,” explained Kit Cho, who teaches psychology at the University of Houston-Downtown, in the report. That assertion is in line with the findings that intact marriages and volunteering in the community are associated with happiness.