

A Little More Happiness

Introduction. I believe that deep down, happiness is the object we crave most. From the size of the entertainment industry in America, one could conclude that we are in desperate need of happiness. It is the "end all of end alls."

We try to get happiness through entertainment. We pay someone to make jokes, tell stories, perform dramatic actions, sing songs. We buy the vitality of another's imagination to divert and enliven our own poor lives. However, that kind of joy never penetrates our lives or changes our basic nature. The effects are extremely temporary -- a few minutes, a few hours, a few days at most. When we run out of money, the happiness trickles away. Many people believe that they can buy happiness -- just look at the lottery! Many people also believe that happiness can be synthetically induced by drugs. This too is incorrect. Happiness must be made or self-induced!

Happiness cannot be commanded, purchased or arranged. James Openheim said, "The foolish man seeks happiness in the distance, the wise grows it under his feet." Happiness is about what God gives, not what we work up. The happiness that develops in a Christian does not come from feeling good about yourself, but feeling good about God and what He has done for us (Romans 5:6-11).

Is it any wonder that Jesus began His sermon on the mount talking about happiness (Matthew 5:3-12)? He taught His disciples about the result of living a life dedicated to God. The term "blessed" means "happy, satisfied or to be congratulated." This kind of happiness is only possible with Jesus Christ.

I am not going to try and sell you on Christian "pop psychology" nor am I advocating a syrupy-sweet attitude that everyone will realize is fake. What we will be discussing is a true, deep, long-lasting happiness that is built upon the word of God and that everyone can attain.

I. ***We Must Have The Correct Purpose In Our Lives***

- A. How do you like being on vacation and being lost? I hate being lost. It is a miserable feeling. Oh, it feels great to be back on track again!
- B. People are miserable when they have not located what is important in their life (Colossians 1:17-18). There is a longing within all of us (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The Christian is to see Jesus as the most important of all things (Galatians 2:20). With Jesus Christ, you can be back on track.
- C. Why do young people who commit suicide? At least in part, they have no idea what life is really all about.
 1. The reason young people do not have this information is that we have stopped giving them a religious background in school and at

- home.
2. We teach them all they need to know in the “real world” except how to cope with deep-seated problems in the long run.
- D. Job did not see himself in God’s scheme (Job 3:3). Solomon had the same problem (Ecclesiastes 12:8). However, both Job and Solomon eventually realized that the world is futile and that it is best to do the will of God (Ecclesiastes 12:13).
1. In Acts 5:41, the disciples were undergoing extreme humiliation, but these men were rejoicing (Matthew 5:10; James 1:2-3,12). Paul even had joy in prison (Philippians 3:1; 4:4).
 2. No matter what the circumstances, we can be happy for we have a hope of heaven (Proverbs 17:22; Colossians 1:5, 23).

II. ***Do Not Focus On Yourself***

- A. The following is a brief recipe for being miserable.
1. Think about yourself. Talk about yourself. Drop “I” as much as possible into every conversation.
 2. Pay close attention to what people think and say about you.
 3. Expect to be appreciated.
 4. Cultivate suspicion, jealousy and envy.
 5. Be sensitive to slights. Never forgive a criticism.
 6. Trust nobody but yourself.
 7. Insist upon special consideration.
 8. Demand that everyone agree with your views and opinions on everything.
 9. Shirk your duties and responsibilities if you can.
 10. Do as little as possible for other people.
- B. I can guarantee you 100% success in being miserable if you will just follow this 10-step plan. The more we turn in on ourselves, the more miserable we will be. True happiness only comes from realizing that we need to serve other people. There are several good examples in the New Testament to follow.
1. Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25).
 2. Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17).
 3. Tabitha (Acts 9:39).
 4. Mary (John 12:3).
- C. Although being happy means keeping ourselves out of a constant focus, we need to keep ourselves in perspective (Romans 12:3). We are important to God (1 Peter 1:20). You are important because of your part in the scheme of God!

III. ***Do Not Nurse A Grudge***

- A. One time an older man lay on his death bed. He called for his lifelong

enemy who had once been his closest friend until an argument sent them their separate ways. The dying man said, "We have been enemies for so long. I am ready to forgive and forget." The other man was so moved that he almost broke down in tears. As the two sat there enjoying each other's company, the dying man said, "If I get well, you know all this is called off, don't you?" Why must we be like that? Why can we not just forgive and forget?

- B. Have you ever seen people who can never forgive? They set themselves up for a miserable existence.
 - 1. Forgiving is good for us because we exercise the type of grace that God has given to us (Matthew 5:44-45; 18:32-35; Luke 7:44-47; Romans 12:19; Ephesians 4:31-32).
 - 2. Plato said, "The greatest gift that man can give is forgiveness." Jean Paul Richter added, "Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness, or else forgiving another."
- C. Grudges are pure evil and demonstrate a wicked heart. Throw away the bitterness and wickedness. It is better to forgive the injustices of the past than to allow bitterness to take root and poison the rest of our lives. Do not sit and "stew" -- forgive and move on!

IV. ***Do Not Borrow Trouble***

- A. Can you change what happened yesterday? Someone once said, "Crying over spilled milk gives life a sour taste" (Philippians 3:13-14). I can change today and tomorrow, but not yesterday.
- B. We worry about things we cannot change or things of yesterday or tomorrow. There is no reason to get all worked up about events that we cannot change (Matthew 6:34; Philippians 4:6-7).
- C. Someone once said about anxiety, "A coward dies a thousand deaths, but a brave man only one." God wants us at our best and that means choosing the good part (Psalm 127:2; Luke 10:41-42; 1 Peter 5:6-7).

V. ***Trust In God And His Providence***

- A. God knows what He is doing. There is nothing better that we can do than to allow God to take the reins of our lives. The world is awfully complex and difficult. Sometimes it takes more than the power we have within ourselves.
- B. Look at the providence of God in the life of Joseph. God was with him through all the twists and turns in his life (Genesis 45:7; 50:20). God brought him safely through it and He will you too (Psalm 145:15; Matthew 6:26-28; Luke 12:6-7; Acts 17:25-28).
- C. Many hundreds of years ago, when men would set out to sea, they would turn their backs and row, not seeing where they went, trusting the helmsman as he guided them along. So it must be between us

and God. We turn our backs from the anxious cares of life and leave the guidance of the helm to God.

Conclusion. Abraham Lincoln once said, "People are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." Jesus came to give people happiness (Luke 2:10; John 10:10). Happy people have their roots in Jesus Christ (John 13:17). We are not talking about an escape from sorrow. Pain and hardship still come, but they are unable to drive out the happiness of someone who is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (1 Peter 1:18-19).

God needs people who are going to live these principles. True happiness is not a requirement of being a Christian, it is a consequence. It is not what we have to acquire in order to experience life in Christ; it is what comes to us when we are walking in the way of faith.

Notice that all these points that have been put before you are within your grasp. Happiness is a learned behavior (Psalm 128:1). God wants you to be happy, but you must be obedient. An old Scottish proverb said, "Be happy while you are living, for you are dead a long time."

Sometimes looking at the gospel means looking at negative aspects, but sometimes we need to focus in on positive ones too. I believe that the intent of gospel preaching is to change people's lives. You can change yours today.