

Quest Of Every Person

TO BE HAPPY

An amendment of the United States constitution enthrones freedom. The amendment includes an article that each citizen has the “right to pursue happiness.” Not only is this the right of every American citizen, it should be the right of every citizen of the world. The desire to be happy is inborn within every person. It is what we want. It is our inner most craving. We want to be happy. Unfortunately, happiness is what everyone wants, but few know where or how to find it. To some, it simply continues to be an illusive dream that is not yet reached a reality. But do not despair. There is a road map to happiness that can easily be discovered.

Happiness is the most inner desire of every individual on earth.

A little girl was once sitting at the breakfast table with her mother when the sun made its presence known by rising over the distant horizon. As its morning light beamed through the cottage window, and onto the spoon of the child who was sitting with her mother at the breakfast table, the little girl declared with joy to her mother, “Mama, I have a spoonful of sunshine!” Solomon was right, “*A merry heart does good, like medicine*” (Pv 17:22).

Every morning we need a big dose of sunshine medicine in our soul in order to brighten our day. We should arise every morning with the declaration, “*This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it*” (Ps 118:24). Upon making this declaration, we must make a decision that each day of our lives will be a day of happiness. We have the choice to make this decision.

It is not totally true what Menchken said, “The only really happy folk are married women and single men.” Nor is it totally true what another prophet stated, “Happiness comes by filling a child’s stomach, a woman’s wardrobe, and a man’s wallet.” And again, happiness is not really acquired as a frustrated younger brother said, “Happiness is having a sister with laryngitis and a TV with only one channel.”

True happiness does not revolve around material things nor pleasurable events. It is something that is within, not pumped in by the environment in which we live. It is almost as someone once said, “Happiness has a habit of pursuing the person who feels grateful to his God, comfortable with his conscience, in favor with his friends, in love with his labors, and in balance with his banker.” But someone correctly stated, “The secret of happiness is learning to accept the impossible, do without the indispensable, and bear the intolerable.”

Happiness is not an environmental issue, neither is it acquired by social influences from the environment in which we live.

In a secular and materialistic world, true happiness is elusive because the material world in which we live is so deceptive. The secular person, unfortunately, looks to events and activities that will entertain, but will not bring longlasting peace of mind. He or she forgets that happiness is not something you experience in the environment in which we live. The materialist always looks for the right possessions he supposes will

bring happiness, but forgets that happiness is not something that can be bought or owned. Happiness is not yearning for the things that we feel will make us happy. The common prophetic statement is always true: **Money cannot buy us happiness.** It only prolongs our search in the wrong direction.

Why do people struggle to find that which seems to be so elusive? It is that too many people find only momentary happiness in things and activities. They subsequently deceive themselves into thinking that they have acquired their goal of happiness in the things that they have acquired. When things become old and broken, and activities no longer satisfy our thirst for inner contentment, we often add to our collection of possessions or change to performing other activities in order to get another “happiness fix.” It is too often too late after a lifetime of such misguided searching that we come to the realization of Solomon’s wisdom, “*Vanities of vanity, all is vanity*” (Ec 1:2).

Those who search for happiness either in the things or activities of this world will eventually, at the end of their lives, confess that the pursuit of happiness in this world through either things or activities, adds up to being a futile effort to really being happy.

Those of an activity oriented culture are always afraid of being bored. The inhabitants of such frenzied cultures have concluded that their happiness is found in their ability to keep themselves involved in a host of events and activities. They are fearful of not having enough to do lest they discover that there is an emptiness inside that cannot be filled with possessions or an assortment of activities. True happiness is an elusive dream to the one who keeps himself busy with earthly diversions. The secularist must remember that happiness is not discovered in the things we want. The philosopher Seneca was right when he wrote, “If you would make a man happy, do not add to his possessions but subtract from his desires.”

Contrary to a secular and materialistic world that would drive

us to seek happiness in the wrong places, we would suggest some fundamental principles that encourage one on his or her road to a happy disposition of life, with the serendipity of an inner peace of mind.

In order to be happy, the first decision one must make is to practice or do those principles that lead to a happy disposition in life.

The following simple principles will at least point one in the right direction to obtain that which often seems to be elusive for too many people, that is, to be happy:

A. Happy people develop a happiness habit.

Ninety-five percent of our behavior is simply habit. We subconsciously do that which we have always done. Since this is true – and it is – **then we must develop a habit of simply being happy.** We need to develop a happy habit. Norman Vincent Peale once wrote, “The happiness habit is developed by simply practicing happy thinking. Make a mental list of happy thoughts and pass them through your mind several times every day.”

The desire to be happy is the first step to becoming happy. Former President Abraham Lincoln of the United States once said, “Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” And that is absolutely true. You must first make up your mind to be happy, and then set yourself to the task of accomplishing your desire for happiness. Sound too simple? It’s not.

We once found a “recipe” for happiness. We do not know the source, but we are sure the one who wrote it knew the key to happiness. You try the recipe and see if it works in your life. We think it will.

Take ...

... 2 heaping cups of **patience**,

... 1 heart full of **love**,

... 3 hands full of **generosity**,

... a dash of **laughter**,

... 1 head full of **understanding**, ...

... sprinkle generously with **kindness**; add plenty of **faith**, and mix well. Spread over a period of a lifetime, and serve everyone you meet.

Not bad advice. This is certainly what Paul had in mind when he wrote, "*Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, rejoice!*" (Ph 4:4). Solomon was again right when he said, "*He who is of a merry heart has a continual feast*" (Pv 15:15).

Sprinkled throughout the Bible are all the principles that create a happy spirit within us, which principles have made millions of God-fearing people happy from the beginning of creation.

Most people can be happy in times when everything seems to be going right, or going their way. But this surface happiness is tried in the balance of life and found wanting when things go wrong. In the brochure, *Attitudes Unlimited*, which was written for executives of corporations in Dallas, Texas, it was stated, "Most anyone can smile when everything goes along smoothly ... **but the valiant one is that person who can still smile when adversities beset him from all directions.**"

Christians must simply remember that they were not baptized in vinegar. Nor should they look as if they have been eating out of a milk churn. A long face does not come with age. Truly happy people have learned that happiness originates from that which is within, not from that which affects one from without. Once happy habits are developed from within, then our environment has little effect on our true inner emotional or mental state of being. It is for this reason that the happiness habit must come from our inside work, regardless of our past

or our present circumstances.

A mental attitude of happiness as God would have us be, can never originate from that which is of this world, for this world will eventually pass away.

B. Happy people live to serve others.

On the eve of His encounter with the cross, and in the presence of disciples who anxiously shuffled in His presence, Jesus took a towel, stooped to the floor, and washed twenty-four dirty feet, and 240 filthy toes that had trudged through the grimy streets of Jerusalem. He knew that when the disciples finally got the point of this behavior on the part of the incarnate Son of God, they would understand what He meant when He stated the following after putting away the now dirty towel: ***“If you know these things, happy are you if you do them”*** (Jn 13:17). “These things” refers to His incarnational offering to others as the Son of God. He humbled Himself even to washing dirty feet, and finally dirty souls. It is only through servitude as this that we discover the secret to happiness. In other words, Jesus was stating in His actions that if you want to feel good you must do good.

Having the mind of Christ as Paul instructed in Philippians 2:5-8, means that we too must get on our knees in service of the needs of others.

Why is it that on our way to the hospital to visit a friend we argue with God? We reason that we have other important things that we could be doing. However, once there, and after a prayer and simple chatter, on our way from the hospital we feel a sense of happiness. We grumble in service for others, but we rejoice when the service is accomplished. Rejoicing after an act of service should enlighten us to the way we are wonderfully made by a God of love. Service brings happiness, a sense of “well done.” Only when we put our hands to serve will we be able to raise our hands in rejoicing. This is the way God created us.

Solomon was right. *“He who despises his neighbor sins; but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he”* (Pv 14:21). Christians can rejoice in the Lord always because they are always in service to others. Galatians 6:10 was not written as a simple legal act to accomplish a supposed meritorious salvation. *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”* This statement was written in order to reflect the nature of true Christianity. The statement exemplifies the lives of Christians. So Jesus said, *“If you know these things, **happy are you if you do them**”* (Jn 13:17). Christians are happy, not because they are commanded to so be, but because of what they do. **The serendipity of service is always happiness.**

Principle of a happy life: YOU DO GOOD; YOU FEEL GOOD.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz wrote in his best selling book, *Psycho-cybernetics*, that people must focus on others in order to be happy within themselves. He stated, “One of the most pleasant thoughts to any human being is the thought that he is needed, that he is important enough and competent enough to help and add to the happiness of some other human being.”

This truth is reflected in the words of Paul to the Ephesian elders, *“I have showed you all things, that by laboring as this you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’”* (At 20:35). It is more blessed to give simply because one receives the inner satisfaction of happiness when giving things rather than receiving things. We understand from this principle of Jesus that receiving or acquiring things is less blessed than blessing others with things. If you would be truly happy, therefore, you must be a giver. The more you give, the happier you are.

The happiest people in the world are always those who give of themselves to others, regardless of the physical possessions they may or may not have (See 2 Co 8:1-4).

C. Happy people focus on good.

In McGuffey's Stories for children, there is the story of the Old Clock. The Old Clock ticked away until one day it started thinking about all the ticks it had to do for an entire year, a total of 31,560,000 ticks. As he concentrated on this enormous number of ticks, discouragement set in, and finally, the Old Clock ceased to tick. However, after some quiet consideration of the matter, the Old Clock reconsidered the task of ticking. He reasoned, "How much effort is there in making only one tick?" He then proceeded to make just one tick. "Not so bad." Then two ticks were made in succession. Then three. Then one hundred. And finally, the Old Clock was back to ticking, thinking on making only one tick at a time.

Some poet inscribed,

**Don't you trouble trouble;
Till trouble troubles you.
Don't you look for trouble;
Let trouble look for you.**

The problem with life is that we often look for trouble. We go to too many pity parties. But it would be good to remember what the Holy Spirit wrote in Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things.

It is not natural to obsess over bad experiences. Think for a moment. Our minds naturally remember good things that happened to us in the past. We remember great experiences

with people, events that brought us happiness and joy. Our minds naturally suppress bad experiences, but focus on good experiences. Yes, we do forget the bad of the past. This is the way God made us. It is only natural to think on that which is good in our past.

One should never allow the bad experiences of the past to spoil his or her happiness in the present.

So if it is natural to think on the good, then that is exactly what we must do. Our present happiness must not be determined by our past library of bad experiences. Our minds naturally do not want us to determine our present state of mind by our past experiences. One cannot build a happy present state of mind over guilt of things in the past. Just do what Paul said, *“I count not myself to have laid hold. But one thing I do, **forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forward to those things that are before**”* (Ph 3:13).

Neither should our present happiness be determined by our present environment or circumstances. Unfortunate circumstances should not determine our inward state of mind. Dr. Matthew N. Chappel wrote, **“Happiness is purely internal. It is produced, not by objects, but by ideas, thoughts and attitudes which can be developed and constructed by the individual’s own activities, irrespective of the environment.”** True happiness is internally developed, not externally controlled.

Focusing on that which is good discards our worry about tomorrow. Jesus gave more than an exhortation in Matthew 6:34. It involves a promise that changes our present mental behavior. ***“Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*** If we mentally forecast bad times to come, we will unconsciously work toward our forecast. The opposite is also

true. If we anticipate that things will be better, sure enough, they will be better. So why ask for trouble when we do not have to be delivered a bag of troubled goods?

We must not be a member of a television audience where the program director holds up a card that reads for the audience, “Laugh,” or “Applause.” We do not have to allow life to dictate to us our mental state of mind. We can choose to be happy. We can choose by focusing on good in order to determine our emotional destiny. Our present state of mind is our choice. Neither the environment nor people with whom we work can determine our happiness.

The key to developing a happy mental attitude in the present is not to allow either the bad experiences of our past, nor the environment in which we presently live, to have any influence over our emotional well-being.

D. Happy people are incurably optimistic.

Angelo Siciliano was a ninety-seven pound (44 kilogram) runt at the age of sixteen. He was bullied around by classmates, pushed around by friend and foe alike. As any physically weak and small teenager, life was not the best.

However, one day he saw the statues of Apollo and Hercules in the Brooklyn Museum in New York. These images of two Greek gods formed an image in his own mind as to what he wanted to be. He immediately bought a newspaper and started exercising according to an exercise program that was published in the newspaper. He eventually developed his own exercise program. He thus took control of his destiny through exercises. A few years later, his dreams were realized. We know him today as the former Charles Atlas.

Pessimism and unhappiness are twins. Numerous surveys have been conducted concerning the mental state of those who are successful in the business world. Every survey concludes that

optimistic, cheerful business people who always looked on the bright side of things were more successful than pessimistic business people. Successful people are optimistic about the future. But in contrast, pessimism produces unhappiness and unhappiness produces “dis - ease,” or better, disease.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz once wrote of a businessman who told him, “I have just lost \$200,000 on the stock market. I am ruined and disgraced.” Maltz then said to the man. “It is a fact that you lost \$200,000. It is your opinion that you are ruined and disgraced.”

Happy people never add their opinion to the circumstances in which they live or from which they have suffered. They are simply optimistic about the future. The great inventor Thomas Edison once lost a multimillion dollar laboratory in a fire. As he and a friend stood by the burned down laboratory, smelling the smoke of the moment, the friend asked Edison, “What will you do now?” Mr. Edison replied, “We will start rebuilding tomorrow morning.”

When things look bad, focus on good things to come. Truly happy people are incurably optimistic about the future. They always look on the bright side of things. And by focusing on the bright side, they discover that things that are good are already happening in their lives.

If one focuses on that which is good in the present, then he or she will be optimistic about that which is to come in the future.

E. Happy people allow Jesus to be their Lord.

Last and most important of all, the road to genuine happiness begins with faith that God is here. There are no truly happy atheists. A truly happy atheist is an oxymoron. No atheist can rejoicefully say, “Thank God I’m an atheist.”

“Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!” (Ps 144:15). It’s true. *“Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God”* (Ps 146:5). *“Whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he”* (Pv 16:20). Since the God who created us is the author of these statements, then we must conclude that God desires that we be happy people. He created our minds in a way that we can be happy in the midst of any circumstances that may occur in this world.

When Jesus is our Lord, we have laid a foundation in our minds for true happiness. It is for this reason that the materialist never reaches for that which he or she strives in reference to true happiness. Someone once said, “Be poor and sleep well. Be rich and sleep restlessly.” If we make riches our god, this god will not bring the serendipity of a good night’s rest. But if Jesus is our Lord, then we will have the peace of mind that surpasses all understanding. The following is true:

*Do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus*** (Ph 4:6,7).

Those who trust in King Jesus as their Lord have One to whom they can go for help. Just knowing that all things are working together for good brings an unexplainable sense of tranquility. And this we know: *“We know that all things work together for good to those who love God”* (Rm 8:28). Only those who truly believe in God can reap the emotional peace of mind that comes from statements as Jesus to His disciples: *“Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me”* (Jn 14:1). Believers can come to Jesus for peace of mind. They will answer the following please of Jesus:

Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for

I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Mt 11:28,29).

The world can provide a superficial happiness, but only faith in God can produce a deep-seated peace of mind that is the source from which all true happiness is given birth.

Happy people believe in God, and that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is now King of kings and Lord of lords. They are thus obedient to His will. Their obedience brings peace of mind. And in peace of mind there is true happiness. Solomon was right: *“Happy is he who keeps the law”* (Pv 29:18). It is as Jesus said. *“Happy are they that hear the word of God and keep it”* (Lk 11:28 - TEV).

It is true, therefore, that the happiest people in the world are those people who believe in God and submit to His will. Their happiness is founded on what is yet to come, not what is only in this life. If one would be happy in the truest sense, therefore, he or she must focus on God and what He has prepared for those who love Him. And what He has prepared for the righteous is an eternal paradise of glory in His presence. This is the hope and happiness of the righteous sons of God. We must always remember the following words that are from God to encourage each one of us:

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.
(Nm 6:24-26).*

Group Review Discussion Questions

[After reading the text of this bookito, answer the following questions in a discussion group with others.]

1. Why is it important to begin each day with a choice to be happy?
2. Why is one being self-deceived to believe that true happiness revolves around that which is of this world?

3. Why is the happiness that money can buy only temporary?
4. Why do activities in the things of this world only a temporary quest for happiness?
5. Why is true happiness a mental habit?
6. Why must happiness always evolve around several personality characteristics as patience, generosity, and understanding?
7. Why are truly happy people happy when things go wrong?
8. Why is happiness the serendipity of doing good for others?
9. Why is it more blessed to give than to receive?
10. How is happiness the result of focusing on one day at a time?
11. Why should the environment in which we live not determine our state of mind?
12. Why is an optimistic person more happy than a pessimistic person?
13. Why is one who obeys the word of God more happy than the person who does not?
14. Why cannot the world understand the peace of mind that comes from God?
15. Why is a believer always more happy than an unbeliever?

ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pf**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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