



*The
Pursuit
of
Happiness*

“Whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he.”

— Proverbs 16:20 (NKJV)

The Pursuit of Happiness

Do you remember those round, yellow, smiley-faced stickers that showed up frequently on stationery and postcards? Often they were accompanied by the simple message, “Smile” or “Be happy.”

Everyone longs to be happy. We look for happiness in money, pleasure, parties, self-improvement programs, material possessions, and in the causes we promote. But in our quest we fail to find the elusive prize. Happiness isn't found by pursuing it. It's a by-product of seeking a close relationship with God. In this relationship, we find a depth of happiness that no person or thing can give. That's what Solomon, the wisest person who ever lived, referred to when he said, “Whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he” (Proverbs 16:20 NKJV).

Are you happy? You can be.

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STRETCHING OUR SOULS

READ:

Proverbs 11:17

**Your own soul is
nourished when you
are kind; it is destroyed
when you are cruel.**
—Proverbs 11:17 (TLB)

A man and his young son went to a repair shop to get a home appliance fixed. When the job was finished, the man asked what the charge would be.

The shop owner replied, “Oh, there is no charge. I’m happy to do it for you!”

The man did not feel right about accepting charity, however, so he persisted in trying to give at least a token payment.

Again and again, the owner refused to accept any money. Finally, his patience was about to run out, so he exclaimed, “Can’t you let a man do something now and

then just to stretch his soul?”

That humble store owner’s reply was a short but powerful sermon on the joy and happiness that can come from a little “stretching of the soul.” His attitude is an example of the truth of Proverbs 11:17, which says, “Your own soul is nourished when you are kind; it is destroyed when you are cruel” (Proverbs 11:17 TLB). We can learn from W. F. Adeney, who wrote, “The exercise of mercy begins in the pain of self-sacrifice, but it soon bears fruit in inward peace and gladness.”

I challenge you to be loving and generous toward others. You will find that doing good carries its own reward. It’s a wonderful way of stretching your soul. —Richard DeHaan

*Do a deed of simple kindness;
Though its end you may not see,
It will reach like widening ripples
Down a long eternity. —Anon.*

**It takes only a moment to be kind,
but the result can last forever.**

GIVING AWAY HAPPINESS

READ:

Proverbs 11:23-26

The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.

—Proverbs 11:25

A *U.S. News & World Report* cover story explored the subject of happiness. According to the article, scientists have found that “strong marriages, family ties, and friendships predict happiness, as do spirituality and self-esteem. Hope is crucial, as is the feeling that life has meaning.” But what if some of these elements are missing in our lives?

Researchers say that “helping people be a little happier can jump-start a process that will lead to stronger relationships, renewed hope, and general upward spiraling of happiness.”

What we give, more than what we get, produces joy in our lives. The Bible says, “Give freely and become more wealthy The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:24-25).

Is there some small way you can help someone else be happier today? Perhaps it’s sending a card, making a phone call, or giving yourself in friendship. Hoarding never produces happiness. It comes as we seek the good of others and give away what God has given us. The source of such an attitude is found in our relationship with Christ. From Him grows the fruit of generosity, happiness, and love.

What will you give away today? —David McCasland

Not what we have, but what we give,

Not what we see, but how we live—

These are the things that build and bless,

That lead to human happiness. —Anon.

It is more blessed to give than to receive. —Jesus

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

READ:
Matthew 5:1-10

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for Him, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
—Matthew 5:3

Everyone is looking for happiness, and people follow many avenues trying to find it. They look for it in money, parties, self-improvement programs, fancy cars, luxurious homes, or by promoting a cause.

That's the wrong list. The right one is found in Matthew 5. Jesus taught us that deep and lasting happiness comes from being right with God. He said we are blessed, or happy, when we are:

Poor in spirit—recognizing our desperate need for God.

Mourning—realizing the awfulness of sin and being genuinely sorry for it.

Meek—demonstrating self-control, even when we are mistreated.

Hungry and thirsty for righteousness—longing to be holy and pure.

Merciful—showing mercy to others, just as God shows mercy to us.

Pure in heart—being singleminded and sincere in our devotion to Christ.

Peacemakers—sharing the peace Christ offers, and promoting peace with one another.

Persecuted—being willing to suffer for Jesus' sake.

Looking for happiness? Follow Jesus' way.

—Dave Branon

*If we commit ourselves to Christ
And follow in His way,
He'll give us life that satisfies
With purpose for each day. —Sper*

**Happiness depends on what you are,
not on what you have.**

THE MAIN PURSUIT

READ:

Ecclesiastes 7:1-14

Sorrow is better than laughter, for sadness has a refining influence on us.

—Ecclesiastes 7:3

have money enough—and not give a care about other people. But as soon as you don't have any of the first three, or if you have compassion for the weeping world around you, then it is impossible to have the foolish kind of happiness that I believe some Christians present as Christianity."

What is our greatest need in life? Is it to be happy? We may long for a change in our circumstances, and sometimes that's what we get. But a changed life is our deepest need. Changed circumstances may make us happier, but a changed life will make us better, for it will make us like Christ.

What is your main pursuit in life? —Joanie Yoder

*Because life's circumstances change,
Our happiness may not remain;
But if we're walking with the Lord,
Our inner joy He will sustain. —Sper*

Happiness is not the goal of life—godliness is.

We've all had our share of both laughter and sorrow. Although we naturally enjoy laughter more than tears, we would have to say that most of the wisdom we've gained along the way we owe to the sad times. Yet, many people are obsessed with the pursuit of personal happiness. The writer of Ecclesiastes rated such a pursuit as foolish (7:3-4).

Several years ago in an interview during his battle with cancer, theologian Francis Schaeffer said, "The only way to be foolishly happy in this world is to be young enough, well enough, and

THE ONLY WAY TO BE HAPPY

READ:

John 7:25-39

Jesus stood and
shouted to the
crowds, "Anyone
who is thirsty may
come to Me!"
—John 7:37

There is no lasting earthly satisfaction. Marriage, family, money, fame, enlightenment, travel, athletics, academic achievement—nothing completes our joy. Any satisfaction we gain in our quest fades quickly and becomes a vague memory, if it can be remembered at all.

Oh, to be sure, there are happy events along the way, unexpected moments when we experience pure delight. But those moments are fleeting, and we can never go back in time to relive them and recapture the sensation.

Why then do we keep seeking for something to satisfy us? Simply put, it's because we *have* to. Whether we realize it or not, our souls are thirsting for God. Every desire, every aspiration, every longing of our nature is nothing less than a yearning for God. We were born for His love and we cannot live without it. He is the happiness for which we have been searching all our lives. Everything that we desire is found in Him—and infinitely more.

And so, when you find yourself restless and thirsting for something more in life, respond to Jesus' invitation, "Anyone who is thirsty may come to Me!" (John 7:37).

Go to Him, drink freely of His grace and forgiveness, and experience true joy. —David Roper

*Happiness is to know the Savior,
Living a life within His favor,
Having a change in my behavior,
Happiness is the Lord. —Stanphill*

**To know lasting happiness,
we must get to know Jesus.**

TANTALIZING

READ:

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

As I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless.

—Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

In Greek mythology, King Tantalus offended the gods and was punished in the underworld. He was placed in a lake in water up to his chin, but whenever he attempted to satisfy his burning thirst the water receded. Over his head were branches laden with choice fruit, but when he tried to satisfy his hunger they eluded his grasping hands. Tantalus, therefore, became the symbol of utter frustration. Even today his name is remembered in the English word *tantalize*.

Outside of a relationship with God, many things in life are tantalizing but unrewarding. The author of Ecclesiastes pursued happiness through knowledge, pleasure, riches, and work. Nothing satisfied the hunger in his soul. So he wrote, “But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless” (v.11). It was only when he focused on knowing and pleasing God (12:13-14) that he found life’s true purpose.

If you are among those who have been tantalized by what you thought would bring you happiness and peace, and you feel frustrated and worn out, come to Jesus. He promised, “I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). You will discover with joy that He has everything you’ve ever hoped for—and much more.

—Henry Bosch

*Happiness is never found
When happiness is sought;
It's found instead in Jesus*

And what His blood has bought. —D. DeHaan

I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. —Jesus