



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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Are You Happy?

By
Jackie M. Stearsman

We may deceive ourselves into thinking we are happy if we set our standards low enough. For example I read the following low view of happiness: "A mental state aided by wine, women and tobacco." Another has a view closer to the truth: "Essentially a state of going somewhere, wholeheartedly, one-directionally, without regret or reservation" William H. Sheldon.

Happiness is a state of mind. To most, happiness is a set of circumstances that results in a state of mind described as joy or ecstasy, the absence of sorrow, a state of well-being, or contentment. To properly understand happiness we must recognize it as a by-product of something greater. If we think we can make ourselves happy or make another happy we are most

likely frustrated. In fact life experiences and the teaching of the Bible will demonstrate that the most miserable person is that individual whose life is totally selfish (Matt. 16:25).

Have You Included God?

The Bible would have us know that we are created and that the Creator has created a set of circumstances (the world in which we live) to show us our need for Him, if we would have genuine contentment and happiness. Things will not bring lasting joy. Things become old; familiarity with things will often mean they lose their value. Man is mortal; the more he reflects upon this the greater the misery. That which brings joy at one moment may bring sorrow in another. People may deceive us and let us

down. To have life sustaining happiness and contentment we must place God and His cause foremost in life ". . . happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Psalm 144:15). "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he" (Prov. 16:20). "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 16:33).

Evaluating Happiness

Happiness must have a moral base. "To live without a moral base is to live on a subhuman level." God, who made man in His image, never intended for man to live on bread alone. He gave a standard that is designed to promote well-being and lasting happiness. "Man shall not live by

bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Man often chooses that which he thinks will bring him joy or satisfaction but often learns that it was not to be. Great harm, sorrow, and difficulties could be avoided to both the person and society, if individuals would but consider the rules of life before they begin the pursuit of happiness. "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Prov. 29:18).

How Do You Relate to Others?

One of the greatest deterrents to superficial happiness is how others affect us. Some are miserable around others. Some are fearful of others. Some are making merchandise of others. God intended for us to be related to others and teaches us that our lasting well-being is tied to others. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40). Great misery comes to those who have poor re-

lationships with others. God would have us know that we must do all within our power to be at peace with our fellowman. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

How Is Your Vigor?

When we consider the teaching of the Bible we learn that God does not tolerate laziness, indifference, or idleness. If a man does not work he is not to be supported by those who do (II Thess. 3:6-13). Lukewarm and indifferent Christians are rejected by the Lord (Rev. 3:14-22). Lazy and idle persons in the home are a source of misery to others as well as themselves. God blesses those who take advantage of their opportunities and are energetic in their work. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men" (Prov. 22:29). What are the lessons we are to learn from those who received talents (Matt. 25:14-30)?

Are You Wise?

"Happiness comes to those who possess true wisdom (Prov. 3:13). Wisdom is the spiritual/intellectual ability to integrate truth as a whole. Wisdom begins with God who has clearly

revealed Himself in history (Prov. 9:10). The person who possesses wisdom will reflect a wholesome balance in his life (Phil. 4:5-9). That balance will include a profound acceptance of one's self, of others, and of life (Phil. 4:12). The wise person does not give himself to peripheral issues nor is he caught pursuing tangents (Matt. 23:23). His is a life of faith, wonder, gratitude, and hope, which produces an enthusiasm for living and opens the door for happiness."

If you are unhappy is it because you have been foolish? If our lives are not following true wisdom they will not be enjoying true happiness.

Are you Healthy?

"The healthier a person is spiritually and psychologically the greater his potential for happiness. A person so preoccupied with his own safety, his own anxiety, his own depression that he cannot lay aside his defensiveness sufficiently either to form

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deep friendships or to respond to life spontaneously will experience little or no happiness. (1) Healthy people do not distort reality to fit their wishes. True happiness must be reality-based; it is not an illusion. (2) Happiness does not exclude pain or grief, but [excludes] only depression and the sense of worthlessness. (3) The person who is in the process of actualizing [fulfilling] his own unique potential will have the greatest opportunity for experiencing happiness. (4) The possibility for happiness is greatly increased when there is the freedom to learn through experience, the openness to change, and the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. Rigidity blocks the life process. (5) The psychological necessity which is most important to every human being is love. From birth to the grave, being loved does more to fill the psyche with a sense of well-being than all else. Happiness is always connected to love."

The Bible shows the necessity of love in the following words: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all

knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I Cor. 13:1-3).

Conclusion

Let us understand that happiness is possible to all. Happiness is not always related to the immediate circumstances of life. It may be necessary to place our thoughts and hopes beyond the immediate to the ultimate. Happiness is a by-product. It is the fruit of a life that is centered in God and His ways. True and lasting happiness will not be to the lazy, indifferent, and spiritually illiterate. Happiness costs us our selfish ambitions and demands our best. Only then may we expect to enjoy tranquility of mind and soul. Are you happy? Why are you happy? If you are unhappy, why?

[The quoted material above, not from the Bible, is from an article on happiness by C. Davis in the CDROM version of The Elwell Evangelical Dictionary.]



Sympathy To Gene Stilwell Family

We extend our sympathy to brother Stilwell at the death of his grandmother, Jennie Stilwell, April 15, 1994. Condolences may be sent to the school or to Gene at his home address:

Gene Stilwell
7221 Shepherd Street
Sarasota, FL 34243



New Board Members

The Florida School of Preaching is under a board of directors. The direction and stability of any institution lies at the feet of its leadership. We are proud of our board of directors. They serve at their own expense and sacrifice. Some must come many miles to attend the board meetings.

Recently three new members of the Board were selected. All of these are elders of faithful congregations of the church of Christ. (1) Carl Faires is an elder of the South Seminole Church of Christ, Winter Park, Florida, (2) Dick Mechling, Jr. is an elder of the Wesconnett Church of Christ in Jacksonville, Florida, and (3) David Spurlock is an elder of the church of Christ,

Kissimmee, Florida.

We want you to know those that provide direction to the school and we provide you with this information each month in this publication. Page two has this data but we wanted you to know of the additions to the board that has been made this year.



Lectureship 1995

As you can appreciate before we can have our lectures printed in book form as this year, we must begin early in order to select the subject matter and the speakers in order to assign the topics and have them published by the time of the January event.

The lectures for this year will be under the major topic of "THE GOOD NEWS THAT TROUBLES THE WORLD." It is important for faithful Christians to understand their role in carrying the good news to the world and what to expect when it is presented to those who do

not appreciate it. The forces of evil turn the good news into bad news. They manifest their misunderstanding of the message by their response. It is not uncommon to hear someone exclaim: "You mean I am lost if I am not baptized?" "You think that church saves one?" "You think you are the only one right?" All such statements are designed by those who do not appreciate nor preach the good news of the Christ.

In the process of the lectures we will have presented clear and specific definitions of what constitutes the good news and what constitutes the world. There will be a study on why the good news disturbs the homosexual community.

Some are charged with being trouble makers that bring good news to the world. We will consider just who it is that troubles the world and why.

History records the efforts of some that sought to call men back to the Bible and how some made

great progress in this. There were others that returned to the world of religious confusion. We are fortunate to have brother Adron Doran to write chapters on this and to speak two days on this subject. Brother J.E Chote will present chapters in the book on present day movements back to the world away from the good news of Jesus Christ.

The good news troubles some women who are greatly influenced by the world. We will have lessons designed to address this matter as well as many others.

You will not want to miss these lectures. We will be advertising in brotherhood publications in the coming months. Watch for this and encourage others to be a part of our lectures in January of 95. It will be the twentieth series of lectures. If you have questions please call or write. We will have more in this publication in the coming months.



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