

Acts 20:35 NIV

“Finding the Gift of Happiness”

“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: **‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’**”

Giving brings happiness to the giver.

What gift would change your life?

Finding the guy or girl of your dreams?

Winning the Lotto?

Freedom from a life-threatening disease?

Receiving the recognition you think you deserve?



Three friends walked along the beach on a deserted island: a Spaniard, a Frenchman, and an Englishman.

A genie appeared and said:

“I’ll grant each of you one wish and one alone.”

Said the Spaniard:

“I’d love to be back in Madrid on the shady side of a bullring sitting next to a beautiful senorita.”

Suddenly he was transported to Spain seated next to an attractive Spanish girl at a bullring.

The Frenchman said, “My wish is to be in Paris seated at a quaint sidewalk café, drinking Bordeaux wine.” Suddenly, he was in the shadow of the Eiffel

Tower sipping his favorite wine while enjoying cheese and French bread.

The genie turned to the Englishman and asked, **“And what wish may I grant for you?”**

The Englishman said,

“I’m so bloody lonely. I want my friends back.”
Making everyone happy challenges the best minds.

For most of us, happiness is conditional—

“If only I had this . . .”

Years ago at Christmastime, the Sioux City Journal printed the following letters to Santa: Note: the spelling follows the original letters.

Dear Santa,

“I want for Christmas is gameboy sp, Lego Set, 100,000,000 dollors, ice cream, x box I really want for Christmas is a x box. Signed Tyler”

“Dear Santa, I want a 13” color tv for my room, the movies’s Legelle Blond 2, Holes finding Nemo, easy bake oven mixes, baby swing, stathinary set, blanket bed set, board games, cd games, crayola crayon marker, sandles.

Signed, Leah’

At least once, you’ve likely received the gift you thought would make you happy.

Did you stay happy?

Some people enjoy things that most only dream about—unlimited income and opportunities.

But are they happy?

The late George Steinbrenner, owner of the New York Yankees got most of what he wanted—the highest paid baseball players in the universe. He got the media attention he enjoyed. **His teams won several World Series. But whenever cameras turned on him at ballgames, it didn't appear that Steinbrenner was a happy man.**

Liz Taylor was in the public eye from childhood. Acclaimed as one of the most beautiful women in history, she was as popular as Taylor Swift is today.

Liz Taylor enjoyed the company of numerous, handsome, talented men. She kept the ones she wanted. Liz was wealthy and had her own perfume brands.



Despite her valiant efforts, I never got the impression that Ms. Taylor attained happiness.

Do you?

Andrew Carnegie once said,

“Millionaires seldom smile.”

What makes people happy?

Jesus said:

“It's more blessed to give than to receive.”

Are you thinking:

“Bob, What's this blessed stuff? I thought that we were talking happiness, not blessedness.”

To us, blessed folks live saintly lives and make extraordinary sacrifices like Mother Theresa, or Joseph and Mary.

We sing songs entitled,

“Blessed Assurance” and “Blessed Jesus.”

Isn't “blessedness” something like extreme piety or holiness?

Besides, blessed sounds old-fashioned to some. Jesus repeated *blessedness* in the beatitudes.

- **Blessed are the poor in spirit.**
- **Blessed are the pure in heart.**
- **Blessed are those who mourn.**
- **Blessed are the merciful.**

The rich, powerful Greek word translated *blessed* doesn't have a good English equivalent.

When I was about eleven, I climbed up onto the counter of my mother's kitchen cabinet and took a swig of banana extract.

That potent stuff packed a **wallop** and nearly knocked me to the floor.

The word translated “blessed” packs a different type of potency.

Scholars write volumes trying to explain “blessed.”

The full meaning of *blessed* is unfathomable.

“Happy” is only one piece of the *blessed pie*.
Imagine a guy and a girl smitten with each other going on their first date.
The guy goes to the girl’s door.
When the door opens, he sees her dressed beautifully and with a lovely smile.
She beholds this dreamy dude.
They walk out to the car, get in and sit beside each other.

If you asked them, “Are you happy?”
They’d say, “Absolutely!”

I don’t have to tell you that “happy” doesn’t describes all the emotions you feel when the girl or guy of your dreams sits next to you.
No one word completely describes your joy, your excitement, your pride, your gratitude that this dreamy person sits right there by you.
Neither does “happiness” cover all the joy and gratification of the word translated “blessed.”

Part of the blessedness in giving involves the recognition that we’re involved in something that lasts longer than this life and is more meaningful than anything we experience now.

I was born in a central Kansas farmhouse.
A little later, the folks moved into town across the street from Roosevelt School.



My home for ten years was Hoisington, Kansas, where my dad worked for the railroad.

I was happy at times, sad at others, and as fearful of some things as most kids in my neighborhood.

The parents occasionally took us on train trips to Kansas City and to visit relatives in Illinois and California.

But my world centered on my friends and family in that Kansas town.

Nothing made the town extraordinary; wheat and scattered oil wells covered the flat countryside.

When I was 10, Dad said: “We’re going to Oregon.”

I’d always gone to the school across the street, had neighborhood friends, and didn’t want to leave them.

It troubled me that we didn’t know anyone in Oregon.

The folks sold the house across from the school, bought a used 1940 Oldsmobile, put all of their belongings and four kids in it and headed to Oregon via the southern route (Route 66) so that we could spend Christmas with one of my older sisters and her husband in San Diego, where he was stationed in the navy.

My sister lived in a small trailer house in a huge San Diego trailer park filled with military people.

Because it was so crowded in the trailer, my brother Don and I spent a lot of time in the back seat of that Oldsmobile playing our favorite and only game we owned—Monopoly. ®

One day, a sad-faced boy showed up and began watching us play through the car door window. After the boy watched for some time, he asked to borrow our prized Monopoly set.

As I recall, Don and I begrudgingly agreed to lend our game, but a thorny issue arose.

Someone in the boy's family had a serious communicable disease.

If we took the game back after we loaned it, we risked catching that malady.

So dad encouraged us to give our Monopoly set to that sad boy.

Dad promised us that, he'd buy us a new set when we got to Oregon.

Very reluctantly, Don and I gave away the only game and toy we owned.

We didn't exactly experience the joy of giving.

Money was tight for the first years we lived in Oregon; dad never replaced that Monopoly set.



Something else occurred that took away the disappointment Don and I felt.

That first January day Don and I got to Oregon was wet, but not cold.

At church in Oregon City, our folks found old friends they had known in Oklahoma.

The friends owned a big house situated about a half mile up the hill from the Willamette River south of Portland.

They invited us to stay with them until we could move into the house the parents bought.

Those friends had three grandsons about our age. That day, Don and I were playing with those three boys running down the hill toward a river that dwarfed anything I'd seen in Kansas.

We felt amazing freedom.

We could run, play, explore the woods, and climb trees.

We played basketball with a real basketball (we'd always played with a tennis ball at home) ---

And football with a real ball (Don and I had played with an old Quaker Oats box in Kansas).

Soon, we enjoyed fruit in our friends' orchard—several types of plums, apples, pears, and all kinds of berries.

It was years before I missed that Monopoly set.

Life was so much better in Oregon.

Little did I know then that across the river, a few miles away the way crows fly, a young girl named Norma was also adjusting to life in Oregon.

We met at the Oregon City Church of Christ six or seven years later.

It took me a while to appreciate the lesson about giving dad taught me.

I also never told him how much his example of devotion to Jesus' church meant to me.

When we come to know Jesus, he gives us a better life—freedom from guilt, the joy of eternal life, a purpose. That's part of the blessedness we enjoy.

“Blessedness” includes a rich, full life.

The world keeps looking for happiness and missing it because it seeks happiness incorrectly.

If you are trying to be happy by experiencing and obtaining things, you'll be miserable.

“If I just had a different job, better parents, more money, more education, a bigger house, I'd be happy.”

If anyone—man or woman—spends too much time thinking about self and not concerned about others, something happens to the inside of that person.

I've witnessed it repeatedly in others and in me.

God designed us to give—to be concerned for others.

If we don't, our inner person becomes ruffled and withered.

Focusing on ourselves and our own happiness makes us miserable.

Happiness come from giving, not receiving.

“It's more blessed to give than to receive.”

The great writer, Evelyn Underhill was having a difficult time spiritually. She wrote to her spiritual counselor, Baron Von Hügel. He advised her to spend less time in spiritual retreats and to give more time to real people, helping them with their problems. You don't find the kingdom of God by retreating into the desert or into yourself. You find the kingdom of God by giving. (I don't recall the original source of this).

I'd like to read one more “Dear Santa” letter:

“Dear Santa,

I want nuthnig this yer--all I want is you to give the jowe ov Christmas.

Megan”

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”



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