

Happiness, Understanding

Rational, intelligent, normal people want to be happy. No one intentionally makes decisions which they know will make them miserable. Even animals are motivated by a sense of happiness. Trainers often reward their animals by giving them a treat when a task is properly performed. So, why is happiness so hard to obtain or is it realistic to desire happiness?

The framers of our country thought it worth mentioning in The Declaration of Independence as the second paragraph says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and *the pursuit of Happiness.*" Often, we speak of life and liberty but how often is "pursuit of happiness" mentioned as one of the fundamental rights of mankind?

There are different levels to happiness. A cup of my favorite ice cream tends to make me happy, my teaming winning brings on a sense of wellbeing, but both are temporary feelings. There is something more than temporary happiness which we desire.

What is happiness? One definition is "well-being." When I am prospering, when I feel good, when I am successful, I tend to be happy. Granted there are folks who seem to actually be happy when they are miserable and making others miserable. The gossip, trouble makers, those quick to get into mischief, etc. I tend to agree with Abraham Lincoln when he said most people are about as happy as they make up their mind to be. I knew a brother and sister in Christ who lived in an old block house, at times they did not have much in terms of money, their health was deteriorating but every time I saw them, they seemed pretty happy.

Man left to himself often doesn't know what will make him happy. Have you ever wanted something so bad you could almost taste it? You work really hard, anticipate getting it, and then when you obtain "it" you are disappointed. Let me give you an example; people work to find the right mate, they make plans, eventually get married, but afterward they get a divorce. They did not intentionally enter into a "bad marriage" or was it something else which caused their unhappiness.

I find it interesting, in a society so dedicated to luxury, having a good time, joy, and self-fulfillment that there are so many depressed, unhappy people. While working in a doctor's office I noticed many patients had the diagnosis of fatigue. I asked about it and both

doctors said it was really depression but since insurances won't pay for that diagnosis, they give one for fatigue. I know medical causes for depression but some it is due to unhappiness.

Sin cannot be excused by the statement, "But God wants me to be happy", which is used a lot. God wants us to be righteous and happy! Being godly does not mean being miserable all the time. In fact, being godly should make us some of the happiest people in the world.

In my study of the Bible, I found the following passages which explains one reason people are unhappy. "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." (Jeremiah 10:23) Sin does not make man happy in the long term, any joy and happiness from sin will be short lived and then bring about sorrow. Rejecting God will not bring about happiness. The nation of Israel wanted a king because they were unhappy with God's leadership. "And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." (1 Samuel 8:7). In the short-term Israel did have military victories and success but in the long term they went into apostasy and ruin.

If you want to be happy then you must do the things which will bring about true happiness. Allow God to correct you when you stray from His word, "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore, do not despise the chastening of the Almighty." (Job 5:17). Trust God's word when making decisions and enduring trials, "He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he." (Proverbs 16:20)

Read the Sermon on the Mount and notice the "Beatitudes". They speak of being blessed which means happy. If you want to be happy, be humble instead of proud and arrogant; be a peacemaker instead of one creating conflict, be merciful instead of seeking your pound of flesh, be saddened by sin instead of laughing at it or indulging in it, be hungry and thirst for God's word instead of selfishness, and be looking for heaven on the other side of the grave instead of in this world.

Our "pursuit of happiness" should draw us closer to God for that is where true happiness will be found. -Dennis Tucker