

HOW TO FIND HAPPINESS

Part 2

Editor's note: Last month in Part 1, we saw that Jesus said happiness could be found where there is spiritual poverty, sadness, and humility. The final five places of happiness will be discussed in the conclusion of this article.

Happiness is found where there is . . .Hunger.

Matthew 5:6 *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."* (NIV)

The hunger referred to here is not the rumble of a missed meal, but the gnawing hunger that results from deprivation of another sort. It is a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Contrast the self-satisfied with the hungry. Jesus says the self-satisfied are not going to be happy. Only those who are not self-satisfied will be blessed.

How hungry are you for righteousness? We are a nation of children at God's table. We have come to him saying we are hungry. God offers us healthy vegetables, and we say to him, "I'm not hungry for vegetables. I'm hungry for dessert!" Is your appetite too specific to truly qualify as hunger? Most of us want fast food goodness, easy goodness. Most of us settle for "good enough."

I want you to notice something here. This happiness is found in route, not the arrival. The hungering itself is the precondition that brings about happiness. There is happiness with that hunger for righteousness. We are in process now. Feeding our hunger actually increases our appetite, increasing our hunger and thirst, and this brings about satisfaction even as we are hungry.

What if I'm not hungry for spiritual things right now? Should I wait? Don't wait. The only way I know to develop a hunger for the right things when you aren't presently hungry for them is by eating appetizers. In other words when you start feasting on the right things, you want more of the right things to feast on. You actually train your appetite to crave that which is good. The more you get the good stuff the more you want it, the more satisfied you are, yet the more you want it. It is a great and happy place to find yourself when you start craving the right things.

By the way, the reverse is also true. The more you fill yourself with the bad stuff, the more dull your appetite becomes for good things. What are you using to satisfy yourself? Jesus says, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."* Happiness is found in the strange place of hunger.

Happiness is found where there is . . .Forgiveness.

Matthew 5:7 *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”* (NIV)

Most will agree that mercy is a blessing when you receive it, but here Jesus says, “Blessed are the merciful...”- those who give it. We want to receive mercy, but when injustice strikes, that’s probably not the thing we want to extend.

Happiness is found in strange places. Some of you know what I mean; you were unhappy for years because of the hurt that was inflicted upon you. You never felt peace until you finally forgave the person who hurt you deeply. Maybe that person didn’t even know, or didn’t even care, but you knew, and you cared, and forgiveness was the way you were finally released.

Happiness is found in strange places. It is found in the tears of forgiveness and release. Since Christ could forgive you what you did to him, you can forgive others. As you have been extended mercy, you become empowered to extend mercy to someone else.

Happiness is found where there is . . .Purity of Heart.

Matthew 5:8 *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”* (NIV)

The non-Christian does not believe that the pure of heart are blessed. The Christian knows a wonderful secret. Purity carries its own reward. It is a lifestyle that brings health and contentment.

Purity isn’t popular. The popular movies and videos aren’t rated “G”. Why is that? People have stimulated that part of their flesh that craves fleshly things, and as a result people are craving things that are not pure. Blessed are the pure in heart. We need to guard our hearts. The pure in heart are morally pure, honest and sincere. What is true on the outside is true on the inside as well. In fact if we follow Paul’s advice, we will have the same attitude as Christ (Phil. 2:5). If we focus right there, on the attitude of Christ, the actions will take care of themselves. If we focus on a heart like Christ’s we will find that our actions will follow suit. We will become people of integrity. The real question for us is “What are we holding back from God in our hearts?” If we aren’t holding anything back, we are 100 percent committed to God. This is the formula for integrity. This is the formula for happiness. But guess what, you can’t get there by your own effort; you have to go through the steps we’ve already mentioned.

Happiness is found where there is . . .Conflict.

Matthew 5:9 *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”* (NIV)

You should notice that Jesus did not say, “Blessed are the peace-lovers.” Everybody enjoys peace. But just because you enjoy peace does not mean you are willing to go through the painful process of making peace. Making peace often means stepping into the conflict in order to make peace. Reconciliation often requires confrontation. Peace lovers avoid confrontation. It is too uncomfortable and unsettling. Peacemakers risk themselves by entering the tunnel of chaos to come through to the other side to work toward reconciliation. If we dare to make peace, then we will be given the greatest compliment a person may know on earth. We will be called “sons of God.” Jesus was a peace maker. It cost him his life. But he was raised again to resurrection and raised the possibility of reconciliation. We become like him when we take on the challenge of making peace. Happiness is found in strange places. It is found where there is conflict.

Happiness is found where there is . . .Mistreatment.

Matthew 5:10 *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* (NIV)

Don’t miss the surprises in Jesus’ statements. Each one of his statements was surprising. This one is surprising because everyone viewed suffering as an indicator that something is wrong. But Jesus shows that suffering mistreatment like this may be an indicator that something is right! This kind of suffering does not indicate God’s displeasure. This kind of suffering marks people as truly those who are like Jesus and approved by God. Christians are citizens of another kingdom, yet we live in this hostile kingdom. This fact results in clashes and mistreatments. Those who are effectively living the Christian life will be living through difficulties and hardships. Some of these hardships will be caused directly because of the stands we take.

Everyone wants to be liked; it is our nature. It is not possible to please everyone, especially if you are a Christian. A person who lives as a genuine Christian is perceived as a real nuisance to many who are not Christian. Why is that? Why are Christians who endeavor to be peace makers perceived as trouble makers? Perhaps Jesus answered this question when he said something that sounds very different.

Matthew 10:34-36 *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.”* (NIV)

How could this come from the same man? Jesus just understood the simple truth that those who become followers of Christ would become

enemies to people who don't, even though they are trying to be peacemakers. Imagine being in a Jewish household at about 50 A.D., and you became a follower of Christ. This brought division within the family whether you wanted it to or not.

Persecution can be a character builder. It becomes a visible proof of your allegiance. Often the persecuted church is a more pure church. The persecution has a tendency to shake off all the dead wood from the branches. Persecution can make us a more effective witness.

Conclusion

Well, that's the picture of the happy life. How do you like it? You don't have to accept it, you know. But when you find yourself asking, "Is there something more?" Remember that Jesus told you how to find happiness in strange places.

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Explain what the Bible means in Genesis 3:7, "*The eyes of them both were opened.*" Could not Adam and Eve see already even before they sinned?

ANSWER: The problem appears to be in the fact that physical eyesight is not the subject under consideration. Both Adam and Eve had eyes and could see. In Genesis 2:15 the Bible says, "*The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*" Physical eyesight was necessary in accomplishing this mission of keeping the garden. Then Genesis 3:6 says that Eve "*saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes.*"

Under consideration is the fact that Eve's eyes of understanding were opened. Prior to the sin of Adam and Eve they were innocent, not even ashamed that they were naked, but upon losing their innocence they acquired an understanding which they did not have before.

Similar to this way of explaining matters was the conversion of Saul. In Acts 9:7 the Bible says that those with Saul, "*stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.*" Acts 22:9, however, says "*they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me.*" In other words, those with Saul heard the voice, but they did not understand it. We speak the same way in our day. We might say to someone, "What did you say, I did not hear you?" In

reality we mean, "I heard you say something, but I did not understand what you said."

So with Adam and Eve, they could see with their eyes, but they could not understand their sad condition until they had sinned. Their innocence had been lost.

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
June 3 - 8	Taylor's Cross Roads Roanoke, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
June 8-10	Mount Olive Union Grove, AL	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 10 - 15	Mount Carmel Woodland, AL	Various Speakers
June 17 - 22	Ephesus Ephesus, GA	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 22 - 24	Hokes Bluff Hokes Bluff, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 22 - 24	Antioch Douglasville, GA	Ron Scott (Bloomington, IN)
June 25 - 29	Freefield Stateline, MS	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
June 28 - 29	Fellowship Conference Lakepoint Resort State Park Eufaula, AL	Various Speakers

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How many more people did the Lord cause to die from a plague, because they complained that Moses and Aaron were allowing the Lord's people to die?

2. What was to be Delilah's reward for delivering Samson to the Philistine leaders?
3. According to I Kings, how did Ahab die?
4. In Luke's account of the Gospel, after Jesus raised Jarius' daughter from the dead, what advice did He give those attending her?
5. In Paul's letter to the Romans, where did he say he planned to go before he could visit the Romans?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. In Genesis, what man walked with God, and God simply "took him?" ENOCH (Gen. 5:24)
2. What reason did God give Joshua about his men being defeated in their first attempt to take the region called Ai? SOME OF THE MEN KEPT PART OF THE PLUNDERED GOODS FROM JERICHO THAT WERE SUPPOSED TO BE THE LORD'S (Josh. 7:11-12)
3. God said through Ezekiel that the prince of Tyre was wiser than whom? DANIEL (Eze. 28:3)
4. Paul asked the Colossians to "remember my chains." To what did this refer? PAUL WAS WRITING THIS LETTER WHILE IMPRISONED. (Col. 4:3)
5. According to James, what should a person never say when they are tempted? THAT THEY ARE TEMPTED OF GOD (Jas. 1:13)