

Does God Want Me to Be Happy?

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It is said that as Benjamin Franklin concluded a stirring speech on the guarantees of the Constitution, a heckler shouted, "Aw, them words don't mean nothin' at all. Where's all the happiness you say it guarantees us?" Franklin smiled and replied, "My friend, the Constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness; you have to catch it yourself." What do most people want out of life? Most people say they want to be happy. Of course, they may define happiness in different ways.

Blaise Pascal, a seventeenth century philosopher, once wrote:

"All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of the some going to war and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attending with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this objective. This is the motive of every man, even of those who hang themselves."

The Pursuit of Happiness

After trying everything that the world offered, Solomon observed in Ecclesiastes 1:2, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Someone paraphrased it this way, "Soap bubbles, soap bubbles, all is a soap bubble." Of course, this means that the world's allurements and pleasures do not satisfy and bring true, lasting happiness into our lives. In order to experience true happiness and satisfaction in life we must follow God's blueprint.

This brings up an important question. Should a Christian pursue happiness in life? Or should God's people frown upon pursuing "happiness" and never view happiness as part of their true Christian experience? Is happiness our enemy in life? Psalm 144:15 declares: "happy is that people, whose God is the Lord." It would seem that statements such as this, along with many other verses dealing with the subject of happiness, would mean that Christians can and should experience happiness in their daily lives. And yet, there are many writers and speakers who seem to constantly downgrade "happiness" as something that

should be foreign to the Christian experience. Pastors have told me that we should not seek personal happiness in life.

Although some Christians have banned the word “happiness” from their vocabulary, it would seem that God’s people should desire to live a happy and fulfilling life, since God’s Word does promise that we can experience happiness in this life. The Scriptures seem to encourage us to seek or pursue true happiness which is centered in God. And yet, many writers still view happiness as something that is negative and something that should not be sought in the Christian life.

One Christian writer wrote:

“The Bible nowhere speaks about a ‘happy’ Christian; it talks plentifully of joy.”

We sometimes view the word “happiness” with disdain when placing it alongside the word “joy” and note the differences between these two words – joy being better than happiness. However, as Bible students we must distinguish between a “world-view” of happiness, which is dependent on circumstances in life and a “Biblical view” of happiness which is experienced as a result of God’s blessing upon our lives. The happiness that stems from the world is merely an emotion, is dependent on circumstances, and at best is very temporary. But there is a happiness that we can seek and experience in our Christian life which comes from God.

A tourist once visited one of the most luxurious estates in America. Within the house were Italian fireplaces, Belgian tapestries, Oriental rugs, and rare paintings. He remarked to a friend, 'How happy the people must have been who lived here!' 'But they weren't,' the friend replied. 'Although they were millionaires, the husband and wife never spoke to each other. This place was a hotbed of hatred! They had no love for God or for one another.'" This reminds us that true happiness, as taught in the Bible, is not dependent on circumstances.

Biblical Happiness

What is true happiness according to biblical teaching? It’s time we unlock what the Bible says about true happiness. Happiness is a state of well-being, gladness, and contentment we reach when we experience satisfaction from God’s presence

in our life (Ps. 37:4; 16:8-9), when we obey God (Ps. 1:1; John 13:17), and because we are experiencing His spiritual blessings in our daily lives.

Ephesians 1:3 declares:

“Blessed (praise) *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us (*caused us to prosper spiritually and be happy in life*) with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ.”

Here is the point. We are blessed by God and should therefore experience and enjoy the “riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7; 2:7), “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8) and our “spiritual blessings in heavenly places” (Eph. 1:3), which we already possess in Christ. Enjoying the blessings of God results in a daily blessedness and happiness which cannot be replaced by anything else in life.

Yes, God’s blessings result in great enjoyment, enhancement of living, inner gladness, and true satisfaction. The Bible repeatedly speaks of happiness as being part of the daily Christian experience. Happiness is not something foreign to the Christian way of life. Psalm 1:1 declares, “Blessed (happy) is the man ...” Proverbs 16:20, “...whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.” John 13:17, “happy are ye if ye do them.” The Hebrew word for happiness (*esher*) appears as the English words “blessed” and “happy” in the Old Testament (Ps. 1:1; 40:4; 89:15; 112:11; 119:1-2; Prov. 3:13; 14:21; 16:20; 28:14; 29:18).

The Greek word (*makarios*) is the New Testament word for “happy” and appears as the English word “blessed” and “happy” (Matt. 5:3-7; John 13:17; James 5:11; 1 Pet. 3:14; 4:14; Rev. 22:14). Both the Hebrew and Greek words convey the thought of spiritual gladness, blessedness, and delight which results in the inner contentment of one’s soul. In short, a “blessed” person is a happy person who is experiencing God’s favor and blessing in his life.

William Mounce remarks that the New Testament word “*makarios*” conveys the idea of being especially favored: ‘blessed, happy, or privileged.’ This is particularly true of the individual who receives divine favor, as in the blessings cited in the Sermon on the Mount in Mt 5:3–11.” Therefore, one who is happy (*makarios*) is blessed because of God’s divine favor bestowed on them.

As a Christian, we have the blessing and bounty of God upon our lives, and this will result in God's people experiencing true delight and happiness of soul. One of the marks of God's blessing upon lives is the inner happiness that He gives to us when we obey Him, experience His companionship, and properly align ourselves with His will. To be "blessed" by God is to experience happiness, satisfaction, and refreshment from God. When we are blessed by God, we will experience happiness from God. You cannot separate the two since the purpose of God's blessings are designed to produce happiness in our lives.

The "blessed" man (Ps. 1:1) is the happy man. It is the Christian who is experiencing God's favor and true blessing upon his life and happiness is the key byproduct that stems from the Lord's blessing. Happiness, as defined by the world, means that a person's bills are paid, his health is good, and as someone stated long ago, "Everything is going my way." But circumstances in themselves have nothing to do with true happiness since biblical happiness is experienced through our relationship with God, our obedience, and the inner refreshment and satisfaction we gain in life as we live by God's grace and for God's glory. True happiness is not based upon our outward circumstances but is the result of our relationship and commitment to God and His purposes.

Does God want me to be happy in life? Yes! God clearly tells us in His Word that He wants us to experience true, biblical happiness in life. *The blessing of God is associated with the happiness (inner gladness) that God grants to His children who love and obey Him and develop their relationship with His Son.* So, you will experience happiness in your life in direct proportion to how much you love God, commit yourself to His ways, and fellowship with Jesus Christ. When we are blessed by God, we are finding inner gladness and fulfillment of living. The important thing is that we pursue and experience *biblical* happiness – not *conditional* happiness that is based on circumstances and which is defined by the world's standards.

Happiness can be defined as possessing blessedness in life, spiritual enjoyment and gladness that comes from God (Ps. 144:15). Biblical happiness is the direct result of God's blessings, privileges, and grace being showered upon the lives of His children, when we serve and love Him affectionately. Happiness is viewed as something positive that we should desire and possess in view of our walk with Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:4) and commitment to His ways (John 13:17). Happiness (inner

delight and blessedness) is when we are experiencing the favor and fullness of God upon our lives which includes the blessings we receive through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3).

One dictionary definition of happiness is “a state of well-being, a pleasurable or satisfying experience.” This is not far from the biblical understanding of happiness when one realizes that the state of our well-being and the pleasurable and satisfying experiences come from God and not the world’s fleeting pleasures (Heb. 11:25).

John 4:13-14

“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

A truly happy state of living is when we experience God’s inner satisfaction which can only come through the life-giving and life-transforming power that Jesus Christ offers. This is why we sing:

“Drinking at the springs of living water
Happy now am I my soul they satisfy
Drinking at the springs of living water
O wonderful and bountiful supply.”

Happiness and God’s Blessings

Happiness is associated with the spiritual (Eph. 1:3) and physical (1 Tim. 6:17) blessings that God gives to us. The way to cultivate happiness in life is to enjoy the things that God has given to us, rather than being ungrateful for what He has not given us from a physical perspective. The Bible declares that God is the One “who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17) and enjoyment is to experience happiness in life. Enjoying the simple and smaller things of life can produce happiness in our hearts. We must remember that “no good thing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11). We must learn to look at the small things in life as being part of the “good things” (the blessings) that God wants to

shower upon us, and when we have the right perspective, we will experience happiness, enjoyment, and contentment in life (1 Tim. 6:8).

How about seeing a cardinal at a bird feeder, a blue sky on a clear day, two babies looking at each other, the smell of roses or dinner cooking, a photograph of good friends, a recording of music that blesses our heart, an unexpected phone call from a friend, the chiming of a windup clock that we like, our wife's smile, a postcard from a friend, grilling hamburgers together with family, etc.

You get the picture. Happiness does not necessarily revolve around the bigger things but many times the smaller things which God allows to come into our lives. We can be grateful that we can see, hear, smell, touch, taste, and read. All these blessings come from God and are part of the things He has given us which can produce enjoyment and happiness.

2 Corinthians 9:11

"Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God."

Biblical happiness is not so much an outward state of *being* but an inward state of *blessing* that results in spiritual gladness, enjoyment of living, encouragement, and overall fulfillment in life.

Jesus promised in John 10:10:

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Happiness and Jesus

In the New Testament epistles, we discover that possessing a close walk with Jesus Christ is another way to experience true and biblical happiness in life. Our communion with Christ is what results in an abundant, happy, and rewarding life.

Philippians 4:4

"Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice."

The word “rejoice” actually means to be “glad, cheerful, calmly happy, and well off.” It connotes an inner gladness of soul. Rejoicing or gladness is a synonym for happiness and joy. Rejoicing is evidenced in feelings of inner delight, gladness, and happiness which come from our relationship and walk with the Lord. Of course, this rejoicing (inner gladness) won’t remain on the inside! It will be heard in our songs of praise to God. It will be seen in the twinkle in our eyes. It will be recognized by the warm glow of our personalities. It will add an extra jump to our every footstep.

Someone wrote:

“The Christian should be a hallelujah from head to foot.”

You say, “That’s not being realistic. We can’t always be up. There are times we are down.” Do we really believe God when He says, “Rejoice in the Lord always?” When God says something, we ought to believe it. We can have inner gladness everyday of our lives and we can experience it constantly in spite of the adverse circumstances that we might be facing. There is an inner happiness and joy that we can experience on a daily basis when we live close to the Lord and His presence. No, we may not always walk around with a fake smile on our face. We would be expected to weep when a loved one dies (John 11:35; Rom. 12:15), but in spite of the tears we can still possess inner gladness and joy in hearts because we have a constant relationship with the Lord, which results in inward delight and joy through life’s difficulties.

Let’s break down this verse.

1. Location of happiness – “in the Lord” (4b)

This secret for Christian living is often missed today because so many Christians are seeking experiences that are not Bible-based and trying to discover fulfillment outside their relationship and walk with Jesus Christ. Friend, you won’t find what you need for Christian living outside your personal communion and relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything you need for living (from A-Z) is found “in the Lord” (in our relationship with Him). We find joy, happiness, and gladness “in the Lord.” This means that our walk and relationship with the Lord will bring gladness into our soul. The hymn writer captures what the Scripture is teaching here when it says “Rejoice (be glad) in the Lord” (our walk and relationship with Him).

“I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.”

This is how we have joy and happiness! Folks, we are to experience inner joy, enrichment, and fulfillment “in the Lord.” We are to live our lives in close relationship with Jesus and experience His inner gladness in our soul. Rejoice in the Lord!

“When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!”

We need this gladness and glory today! We need His inner joy to possess our souls so that we might live life to the fullest and not be overcome with depression, discouragement, and doubts.

A Christian not only finds gladness and joy in His intimate relationship with Christ, but he also finds himself rejoicing in the Lord (experiencing gladness) when remembering all that God has done and will continue to do in his life. We can rejoice knowing that we are saved, that God cares for us, and that God is working out His sovereign plan for His glory and for the spiritual good of His people (Rom. 8:28). These wonderful blessings are a ground and cause for rejoicing in the Lord (in all of His blessings and work being done in your life).

The best time to rejoice in the Lord, experience His inner gladness, happiness, and joy, is right now. God does not want you to be a sour lemon in your marriage relationship. He wants you to express joy and gladness. A joyful person is much easier to live with than a crabby person!! A marriage partner that is filled with gladness is much easier to enjoy than one who is constantly living in the dumps.

2. Lasting happiness - “always” (4c)

The Bible declares we can rejoice in the Lord “always” (not just when things are running smoothly). Always! This means in the ups and downs of life, in the twists and turns of life, in the valleys and on the mountaintop. No matter what our circumstance might be and what we are facing in life, joy can be experienced. This is because joy is not dependent on our circumstances.

Our gladness, happiness, and joy are found in the Lord and not the stock market, our finances, our circumstances, or even in our earthly relationships. True happiness and joy are not dependent upon our changing circumstances or in the very volatile fluctuating fortunes of life since they can sometimes be like the proverbial yo-yo (up and down).

Someone said:

“A kettle is up to its neck in hot water, but it still sings.”

The Christian can truly sing in the rain! He can experience rejoicing or gladness while passing through life’s difficulties because neither happiness nor joy is dependent on outward circumstances.

Jowett (a very older and wise writer) shares his experience regarding Christian joy: “Christian joy is a mood independent of our immediate circumstances. If it were dependent on our surroundings, then, indeed, it would be as uncertain as an unprotected candle burning on a gusty night. One moment the candle burns clear and steady, the next moment the blaze leaps to the very edge of the wick, and affords little or no light. But Christian joy has no relationship to the transient setting of the life, and therefore it is not the victim of the passing day.”

Yes, we can experience God’s happiness and gladness in spite of difficult days, tough times, and trials. This is because joy and happiness is centered in the Lord! He remains constant. He is unchanging. And when we walk close to the Lord and draw upon His unchanging character, enjoy His presence in our lives, and remain in close fellowship with Him, we can have and experience this joy and happiness.

So how can we “always” have joy in life? How can we rejoice in the Lord always? The answer is simple. It’s because Jesus gave us this promise in Matthew 28:20: Lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Jowett concludes with these words:

“He is with me “all the days”—the prosperous days and the days of adversity; days when the funeral bell is tolling, and days when the wedding bell is ringing. “All the days.”

Since He is with us always, we can find our joy in our relationship and walk with Him. We used to sing in a college singing group, a group called the Choralaires, a song that spoke of Christ’s joy and happiness. It went like this:

“Always there is music
Always there is singing
Always there is gladness
In my heart since Christ has saved me.”

It should be our desire and goal to experience constant joy and happiness in our Christian experience that only Christ can give to us as we live in close relationship to Him. We can rejoice in the Lord always! We really can sing in the rain!

3. Longing for happiness – “And again I say rejoice” (4c)

Paul repeats himself to emphasize the longing and desire we should have in possessing and experiencing inner joy and gladness in our hearts. “Rejoice!” O be glad! He does not only say it once, he says it a second time.” Rejoice!” O be glad!

Rejoicing or expressing joy and happiness in life is NOT an option. It is actually a command to be obeyed and we are not to obey this command just when we are in the mood to do it, or when we have that feel-good factor in our lives. We are to experience joy all the time. As we have seen, even during trials and the tests of life we can experience God’s gladness.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 gives the same command, “Rejoice evermore.” As a Christian, we are to experience a life of continual rejoicing. Our life is not to be lived on the low plain of discouragement, despair, and depression but on a spiritual and higher plain of joy, rejoicing, happiness, and gladness which is found in Christ.

The fervent and fiery evangelist Billy Sunday once remarked:

“To see some people you would think that the essentials of orthodox Christianity is to have a face so long that you could eat oatmeal out of the end of a gas pipe!”

Do have joy in your heart today? Do you have inner gladness and happiness in your heart right now as you are reading this study? What about Monday morning when you go to work?

The old farmer said:

“What’s down in the well comes up in the bucket!”

What is down in the well or your heart? If it’s depression, then depression will come out. If it’s discouragement, then that will come out! If it’s anger, then anger will come out. If it’s joy and happiness in Christ, then joy will come out! It never ceases to amaze me how many Christians walk around as if they were weaned on a dill pickle!

The preacher Henry Ward Beecher declared:

“A man without mirth is like a wagon without springs: He is jolted disagreeably by every pebble in the road.”

When we have ongoing joy and gladness the bumps of life won’t jolt us and steal away God’s inner happiness. Did you ever talk to someone who walks on eggshells? In other words, every little thing disturbs them and they break in pieces and crack up when changes occur in their life. God does not want us to face life in this way. He wants us to be filled with this inner gladness of soul as we delight in His Son Jesus Christ and experience our relationship with Him (Phil. 1:21).

Edwin O. Excell, in 1902, wrote these lovely words in a hymn:

“My soul is so happy in Jesus,
For He is so precious to me;
His voice it is music to hear it,
His face it is heaven to see.

I am happy in Him,
I am happy in Him;
My soul with delight

He fills day and night,
For I am happy in Him.”

An older youth chorus goes like this:

“Happy am I! Jesus is mine forever,
Never to leave! Always in each endeavor,
Leading me on, In a life ending never;
Giving a smile, Every mile, Happy am I!”

Happiness and Obedience

Revelation 22:7 declares:

“Behold, I come quickly: blessed (happy) is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

There is a direct link between happiness and obedience.

Psalm 1:1

“Blessed (happy) is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

When we obey God and separate from the evil and sinful practices of men, we can experience true, inner happiness. Living free from worldly contamination results in our souls being happy and finding true fulfillment in life.

John 13:17

“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

Yes, we experience happiness when we follow the commands of God. Happiness is the result of living an obedient Christian life. As God’s children follow His commands and seek to live a righteous life, they can experience true happiness in life (the favor and blessing of God), which is manifested in our lives as gladness, satisfaction, and true fulfillment of living.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said:

“Seek for happiness and you will never find it. Seek righteousness and you will discover you are happy. It will be there without your knowing it, without your seeking it.”

Ecclesiastes 12:13

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

Max Anders commented in this way:

“Our problem is that we don’t quite believe Solomon. We think that for some unknown reason, he just didn’t get it right. Yes, he had brains, money, looks, fame, and power and wasn’t happy, but if we had brains, money, looks, fame, and power, we would be happy. We would be able to pull it off.”

Why does God require obedience from us? Everything God asks of us, He does so because He wants to give something good to us and/or keep something harmful from us. As someone once stated, “There is no wasted motion with God.” True biblical happiness can be experienced and maintained when we learn to obey God’s commands.

Proverbs 29:18

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”

R. B. Ouellette said:

“Find out what God likes and do it. Find out what God does not like and don’t do it!”

Good Advice. If you want to experience a happy and rewarding life, then obey God. *Happiness is a gift to those who follow God’s truth.* The surest road to happiness is living for God. Great blessing and happiness come into the life of the person who follows God’s Word, who doesn’t ask, “How much can I get away with?” but rather, “How obedient can I be?”

In summary, biblical happiness (spiritual blessedness and delight) stems from the multitudes of blessings that God in His providence and kindness brings into our

lives. In its most narrow sense or understanding, every believer can possess inner gladness of soul and complete enjoyment of living because he has received the blessings of God upon his life (Eph. 1:3).

“There shall be showers of blessing:
This is the promise of love;
There shall be seasons refreshing,
Sent from the Savior above.

Showers of blessing,
Showers of blessing we need:
Mercy drops round us are falling,
But for the showers we plead.”

Happiness and Holiness

Jesus taught in Matthew 5:8:

“Blessed (happy) are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

This is linked with our last point. Obedient living should naturally produce holy living. There is a correlation between holiness and happiness.

Psalm 84:11 gives this promise:

“For the Lord God is a sun (*providing us with illumination*) and shield (*providing us with protection*): the Lord will give grace and glory (*favor and honor*): no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

God wants to bless our lives with “good things” (Matt. 7:11; Jam. 1:17) as we live a consecrated life unto Him and His ways with the result of making us happy and fulfilled in life (). The good things bring enrichment, enjoyment, and happiness into our lives (). However, good things and happiness are contingent upon holiness. To walk in an upright manner means to live a holy and consecrated life before God. In short, God promises to bless our lives and bring us happiness and spiritual enrichment when we live a holy and dedicated life to God. Biblical happiness and holiness are twins. *You cannot be happy without being holy.*

In other words, if we live a holy life and obey God’s commands, it’s only then that we will experience the favor and blessing of God upon our lives and be truly

happy (“happy are ye if ye do them” – John 13:17). Holiness is a requirement for true happiness.

A. W. Tozer wrote:

“No man should desire to be happy who is not at the same time holy. He should spend his efforts in seeking to know and do the will of God, leaving to Christ the matter of how happy he shall be.”

Biblical happiness does not come from happenings. It comes when we are obedient to His Word, living a consecrated life to God, and therefore experience His blessings in our daily lives. Only when we are obedient to God’s commands and apply His Word to our lives daily will we possess gladness, contentment, and total enjoyment of living. Obedience and living a holy life are the key to experiencing true happiness. Scripture repeatedly bears this out.

Proverbs 3:18

“She (wisdom) is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

Proverbs 14:21

“He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.”

A big dog saw a little dog chasing its tail and asked, "Why are you chasing your tail so?" Said the puppy, "I have mastered philosophy; I have solved the problems of the universe which no dog before me has rightly solved; I have learned that the best thing for a dog is happiness, and that happiness is my tail. Therefore I am chasing it; and when I catch it, I shall have happiness." Said the old dog, "My son, I, too, have paid attention to the problems of the universe in my weak way, and I have formed some opinions. I, too, have judged that happiness is a fine thing for a dog, and that happiness is in my tail. But I have noticed that when I chase after it, it keeps running away from me, but when I go about my business, it comes after me."

In a similar way, when we live for Jesus Christ wholeheartedly and obey His commands, we will have happiness follow us. It will find us and we will enjoy a happy and meaningful life. Once again, obedience to God and His ways results in

true and Biblical happiness. Many people feel that happiness can only occur when everything is going their way or when the circumstances of life seem to fall in their favor. But genuine happiness does not come into our lives when our bank account is full of money or when everything seems to be in perfect order (our health, wealth, work, home, etc.). This is not the picture of true biblical happiness but a worldview of happiness which eventually leads to emptiness and despair. The world's view of happiness is fleeting ("the world passeth away" - 1 John 2:17) because it depends on conditions or circumstances going our way, but God's children experience true inner happiness when they are obedient to His commands (Ecc. 12:13; John 14:15).

"Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

Proverbs 29:18

"Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

Although Nancy earned a meager living by hard work, she was a radiant, triumphant believer. One day a wealthy lady with a very gloomy outlook on life said to her, "You're happy now, but what about later? Or suppose your employer moves and you have no job? Or suppose..." Nancy broke in, "Stop! I never suppose! The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want," Then she added, "And it's all those 'supposes' that are making you so miserable. Why don't you give them up and trust the Lord completely?"

When we trust and obey the Lord, we will experience the blessing of God upon our lives ("inherit a blessing" - 1 Pet. 3:9). We will never be "barren nor unfruitful" (2 Pet. 1:8). Instead, our heart will be filled with gladness, gratitude, delight, satisfaction, fulfillment, and we will experience many other spiritual blessings from God, which will thrill our souls and provide us with the kind of life that is worth the living! It is easy to sing when we walk with the King!

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

Happiness and Wisdom

Wisdom is the quality of having knowledge and good judgment. Happiness is linked to a life of possessing spiritual wisdom. A wise person is a happy person. We see this in the proverbs.

Proverbs 3:13

“Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding.”

Proverbs 3:18

“She (wisdom) *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy *is every one* that retaineth her.”

Wisdom pertains to all aspects of life and is experienced in our lives as we know and apply God’s truth to our lives (Prov. 1:2). Making wise decisions and living out a life that is filled with Word-directed wisdom results in true, biblical happiness. When we lack true wisdom, we will also lack happiness. Unwise decisions and paths always result in sorrow and difficulty – not blessedness and happiness. But when we seek God’s wisdom to live according to His standards, then happiness will be experienced in our lives.

Someone remarked:

“The difference between a ‘wise guy’ and a ‘wise man’ is plenty.”

Happiness and Faith

Proverbs 16:20

“He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.”

Psalms 40:4

“Blessed (happy) is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.”

These verses remind us that true happiness in life is always accompanied with faith in God. Without possessing faith in God's promises, provision, and person we will not be truly happy in life or filled with inner gladness and contentment. It takes faith to be happy. We can place our confidence in others, but they can deceive us and keep us from experiencing the kind of happy and satisfying life that God wants to give us. Our faith must be rooted and centered in God and His sufficiency to meet our needs in life (2 Cor. 3:5). This will result in experiencing true happiness in our daily living. Faith is not only the victory (1 John 5:4) but is also the way to a fulfilling and happy life.

Patrick Henry once said:

"My most cherished possession I wish I could leave you is my faith in Jesus Christ, for with him and nothing else you can be happy, but without him and with all else you'll never be happy."

Happiness and the Sermon on the Mount

If we truly want to be blessed or experience happiness in our daily lives, then we should practice how Jesus taught His disciples to live. Living a spiritual life produces happiness in our hearts and lives. Actually, the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount do not necessarily describe what we should *do*; rather, they describe what we should *be* as a disciple or follower of Christ. When we are what we ought to be in *character*, we will naturally produce this type of living in our *conduct* which is expressed before Christ and others. The word "blessed" literally means "happy, fortunate, blissful." Here it speaks of more than a surface emotion. Jesus was describing the divinely bestowed well-being that belongs to those who are disciples and followers of His.

How can we be a happy follower of Christ?

- When we acknowledge our helplessness (Matt. 5:3).

"Blessed (happy) are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The poor in spirit are those who acknowledge their own helplessness and rely on God's power. They sense their spiritual need and find it supplied by the Lord. They are "poor" inwardly which means they have no ability in themselves to please

God and live for Him. The person who relies on God's power experiences happiness.

- When we experience grief (Matt. 5:4).

"Blessed (happy) are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

This sounds like a paradox – happy are the mournful! However, those who mourn (experience anguish and grief over their sins) recognize their need to repent before God and keep their lives in fellowship with Him. The person who does this will live in happiness for they will experience the comfort of having their sins forgiven and fellowshiping with God. Also, we can "mourn" or experience grief in relationship to life's trials and tribulations that we face in life but find our sufficiency in God's strength. This also produces inner happiness. Yes, finding our sufficiency in God during the trials of life produces happiness of soul. Remember that happiness does not mean the absence of sorrow but sorrow that is channeled to God and finding deliverance through Him.

- When we demonstrate humility (Matt. 5:5).

"Blessed (happy) are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Those who are meek refer to the disciples that are truly humble and gentle before others and in their overall character of living. Humble believers are happy believers!

- When we live a righteous life (Matt. 5:6).

"Blessed (happy) are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

As we seek to live a righteous life on a daily basis, a life that honors and glorified God, we will experience true satisfaction in life ("be filled") and this in return produces inner gladness or happiness.

- When we express mercy to others (Matt. 5:7).

"Blessed (happy) are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

To be merciful means to be actively compassionate toward others. It means to help others in need that cannot help themselves. As a result of expressing sympathy toward others, we will be sure to “obtain mercy” from God as we seek to live out our Christian lives. We will also experience mercy in the future in relationship to eternal reward. All of these promises bring happiness to our hearts and lives.

- When we are dedicated to holy living (Matt. 5:8).

“Blessed (happy) are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

We have talked about this already. Living a holy life demonstrates that one’s salvation experience is genuine (Heb. 12:14) and that they will one day enter into God’s presence in Heaven. Living a consecrated and sanctified life produces happiness in our hearts which can only come from living according to God’s standards of purity. The way of the transgressor is hard (Prov. 13:15) but the way of purity results in happiness.

- When we strive for peaceful solutions (Matt. 5:9).

“Blessed (happy) are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

Those who seek to divide, destroy, and promote discord do not experience true happiness in their hearts. Only those who seek to express the peace of Christ to others and promote unity and healing to others experience happiness within their souls. Peacemakers or those who seek to bring peace to others are happy people.

- When we suffer for Christ (Matt. 5:10-11)

“Blessed (happy) are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Blessed (happy) are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.”

Suffering for the name of Jesus Christ or because one is a follower of Christ brings blessing or happiness into our lives. It's truly a privilege to suffer for Christ and experience persecution as He did.

1 Peter 3:14

“But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.”

The persecuted Christian is the happy Christian! This is a different view of happiness than the world portrays.

Happiness versus Joy

What are the differences between biblical happiness and true joy? When examining the Scriptures, there seems to be an overlapping of God's explanation of happiness and joy, especially as we examine the New Testament epistles. We do know that “joy” (gladness, cheerfulness, and calm delight) is presented as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and is directly produced by the Spirit of God. It is based upon the ministry of the Spirit's work taking place inside of our hearts. A very close word associated with “joy” is the word “rejoicing” (2 Cor. 6:10; Phil. 3:1; 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16; 1 Peter 1:8) which also speaks of gladness, cheerfulness, or happiness and is sometimes translated as gladness (Rom. 12:15; 16:19; 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 13:9; Rev. 19:7). This too is the result of the Spirit's work taking place in our hearts. Both happiness and joy are intricately woven together in some measure, since every blessing we have comes from God working within our hearts (Phil. 2:13).

Both joy and happiness seem to be similar descriptive terms in the New Testament which indicate inner gladness and enjoyment in one's life. Sometimes the emphasis for obtaining happiness revolves around personal responsibility (obedience and transformation of living - Ps. 1:1; John 13:17) and on one occasion Paul even stated, “Fulfil ye my joy” (Phil. 2:2). One thing is certain, neither biblical happiness nor joy is dependent upon outward circumstances (“Blessed are they that mourn” – Matt. 5:4); however, joy and happiness are experienced in our hearts by God when we obey His commands and enjoy the blessings that He sends our way. In a nutshell, joy and happiness are contingent upon our

relationship with Christ, obedience, the blessings of God, and the work of the Spirit taking place in the heart.

Happiness and joy naturally coexist together in the believer's daily experience and walk. They work harmoniously together. As the believer experiences his new relationship with Christ, he experiences joy and gladness (Phil. 3:1). As the believer experiences his new life in Christ (transformation of living) he will experience joy and happiness (John 10:10). You really can't have one without the other, since both are intricately woven together as Christians live out the wonder of New Testament Christianity, which is a personal, dynamic, and life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20). If you are experiencing joy, you are also experiencing happiness. Likewise, if you are experiencing happiness, you are also experiencing joy. They are like two peas on the same pod.

Does God want me to be happy in life? Yes! According to what God's Word teaches and what Jesus Himself taught; we should be happy in life! It is something we should actively pursue as we obey God, experience our relationship with Christ, and enjoy all the blessings that God sends our way.

We have discovered in this study that the believer is to pursue happiness in his life, which is based upon obedience to God's commands and is experienced through transformation of living and God's blessings bestowed upon one's life. This results in spiritual gladness, blissfulness, fulfillment, and completeness in life. The Christian who experiences God's blessings is a happy Christian. We also can understand the inner relationship between happiness and joy. Both are part of the Christian experience and are in some measure bound together in our relationship with Christ. We are "complete in him" (Col. 2:10).

This means we can "Rejoice in the Lord always: (be glad) and again I say rejoice" (be glad). Yes, we can always "rejoice" (express gladness and happiness) "in the Lord" because of the relationship we have with Him. How wonderful! How satisfying! Yes, God wants us to be happy in life. If a Christian cannot experience true inner happiness, then no one can.

The great musician Joseph Haydn was once asked why his sacred music was so cheerful. He replied, "When I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the

notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen, and since God has given me a cheerful heart it will be pardoned me that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit."

May this be true for each one of us today! As we walk with the Lord we will experience true inner gladness, joy, and happiness in life.

Psalm 126:2

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them."

Psalm 37:4

"Delight (to make merry, be happy) thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

Ultimately, true and biblical happiness is found in our relationship with the Lord and the blessings He brings into our lives.

Psalm 144:15

"Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case: *yea*, happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD."

Psalm 146:5

"Happy *is he* that *hath* the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope *is* in the LORD his God."

John W. Peterson wrote a little chorus in 1957 that goes like this:

"You'll always be happy
If you walk with the Lord,
You'll always be singing
If you live by His Word;
You may meet with trouble,
Skies may not be blue
But you'll always be happy
If His will you do."

The expression of biblical happiness can be ours as we obey God, experiencing His presence in our lives, and are richly blessed by Him.

