

Happiness is...

Bible Study

The Church of God International (Philippines)

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Introduction

People make new resolution during this time of the year.

One of the primary reasons for making a resolution is to become happier for the coming year.

We live in a generation where the pursuit of happiness is a primary occupation in life

In fact, the right to be happy is a quest every human being is free to pursue; so that in a democratic society, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is guaranteed under the constitution

The American Declaration of Independence, adopted on July 4, 1776, contains these famous words: “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”

People want to be happy. I want to be happy.
You want to be happy. Everyone wants to be
happy.

Happiness makes us feel better, become healthier and live longer. Happiness is essential to our overall well-being.

Therefore, let us make it our goal to be happier
from here on forward.

We need to experience the happiness, joy and blessing of everyday life.

But, what is happiness and where can we find
it?

Pursuit of Happyness

In 2006 there was a blockbuster movie entitled 'The Pursuit of Happyness' starring Will Smith and his son Jaden.

The American biography movie is inspired by the true story of Chris Gardner, a San Francisco salesman struggling to build a future for himself and his 5-year-old son Christopher.

The unusual spelling of the film's title comes from a mural Gardner saw on the wall outside the daycare facility his son attends.

He complains to the owner of the daycare that
“happiness” is incorrectly spelled as
“happyness” and needs to be changed.

Life is a struggle for single father Chris Gardner.
When his girlfriend Linda walks out, Chris is
left to raise Christopher on his own.

Evicted from their apartment, he and his young son find themselves alone with no place to go and are forced to sleep on the streets, in homeless shelters and even behind the locked doors of a metro station bathroom.

Chris eventually lands an unpaid internship at a brutally competitive brokerage firm where only one in twenty interns will make the cut.

The internship pays no money. But, Chris refuses to give in to despair as he struggles to create a better life for himself and his son.

With sheer determination Chris won the coveted full-time position. Fighting back tears he rushes to his son's daycare to embrace Christopher.

With self-confidence and determination to create a better future, Chris Gardner hurdled all the obstacles to become a Wall Street legend.

But, the rag to riches story is more about the American dream of drive and ambition story rather than about happiness.

Happiness is never about money or wealth.
Happiness index does not automatically rise
with increase in income.

In fact, studies upon studies have shown that people who have less yet are contented with what they have, are happier than those who have more.

In fact, the Bible says that the pursuit for money and wealth comes with many troubles.

1 Timothy 6:10

(10) For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Happiness Project

Gretchen Rubin,
the author of
Happiness Project,
had an epiphany one
morning.

She had a sudden realization that she was in danger of wasting her life and the years were slipping away.

She asked herself what she wants from life. The answer was she wanted to be happier.

She looked out the bus window one afternoon and saw a woman trying simultaneously to balance her umbrella, look at her cell phone and pushing her baby stroller to cross the street. “This is my life” she realized. Yet, she never gave it any thought until then.

She grasped two things. The first was she was not as happy as she could be. The second was it will not change unless she changes things.

So, she decided to dedicate a year trying to be happy. That was her one year “Happiness Project.”

She focused on one thing each month to maximize her happiness. She listed 12 things that she wanted to manage to improve her happiness index.

The book talks about her personal happiness project and she said each person's happiness project will be different from hers.

Three things about her happiness project struck me as interesting.

1. To be happy one has to know his goals. If you want to be happy you must know the source of your happiness. She listed the 12 things. For her these are the things that can make her happy.

- a. Boost energy – to live actively
- b. Remember love – to love more
- c. Aim higher – to set achievable goals
- d. Lighten up – to worry less and appreciate more
- e. Be serious about play – to have more time for fun
- f. Make time for friends – to connect socially regularly with friends

- g. Buy some happiness – to spend for some luxuries
- h. Contemplate heaven – to spend more time for spirituality
- i. Pursue a passion – to do things you like
- j. Pay attention – to value experiences
- k. Keep a contented heart – to find satisfaction in everything
- l. Boot camp perfect – to follow all your resolutions

2. Once you know what makes you happy. The next step is to appropriate time to pursue, explore and discover the details that make you happy. Consider the areas of improvement in order to enhance your happiness.

Take for example making time for friends (F). Explore and discover what barkada activities enhance your happiness (be it time for coffee, tea, vacation, shopping, sports, gym, play or simple potluck or backyard BBQ) and with whom are you most happy with. Identify the peculiarity of each relationship that keeps you happy.

3. Form a new habit. Once you have found new ways to make yourself happy make it into a habit. Put in effort to make it work. Spend time, a month, to cultivate the new habit. Change some of the routines and mindsets within a month with happiness in mind.

Happiness is...

Happiness is not a project to pursue. It is impossible to say to yourself that you want to pursue happiness.

The problem with pursuing happiness is that people do not know what it is to pursue and where to begin.

If you follow Gretchen Rubin's suggestions, you will be running around searching and chasing after moments and occasions trying to make yourself happy.

It is a terrible situation to be in. Happiness is not based on situation or moment of gratification. Happiness is not achieved through the frequent repetition of pleasurable experience. You will never find it that way.

The reason people do not find happiness is because they look for the wrong thing and at the wrong place. People look at external stimulus for happiness.

Happiness is not an object to be pursued. Rather
happiness is the result of what happens within
you.

Many people confuse happiness with pleasure.

Pleasure is fleeting and momentary and is dominated by materialism, self-indulgence – basically catering to the pleasures of the five senses.

The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:1-4, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money...without self-control...headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”.

So, what then is happiness?
What is to be happy?

The meaning of happiness is in the word itself.

The word, “happiness” comes from the Old English word “hap”, which means “something that happens”.

“Happiness”, therefore literally means, “that
which happens.”

Happiness happens – when good things happen to you. I like this definition of happiness.

Happiness is a personal experience of joy – a
state of being.

The Bible does not use the word “happy” or
“happiness.”

The Bible often use the word 'blessing' or 'blessed.' Blessed is the state of being that brings true and lasting happiness. To be blessed means to be favored by God.

'Esher'

Hebrew word for blessing is 'esher',
which means happiness.

Blessing therefore are directly associated with
God and comes from God.

'Makarios'

In the New Testament, the primary Greek words translated as "blessing" is Makarios.

Makarios carries the meaning of happiness just
like the Hebrew word esher.

True, lasting happiness is an effect, a result and a consequence of having a close relationship with God.

Happiness happens only when you feel favored
by God.

When God shelters and envelops you with His attention, care and privilege; then you are happy. When you feel safely cocooned in His love; then you are happy.

Happiness is the experience when you pursue a close relationship with God.

The Book of Psalms starts with a citation on
happiness.

Psalm 1:1-3 carries the theme of 'esher' true happiness when it states:

(1) Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,

(2) but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

(3) That person is like a tree planted by streams
of water,

which yields its fruit in season

and whose leaf does not wither—

whatever they do prospers.

Happiness is the outcome of having an intimate relationship with God.

Happiness is experienced as verse 6 of Psalm 1 says: “For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous.”

When you are blessed by God, then you ought to be happy. Here is a list of references to being happy when God looks and cares over you:

Psalm 34:8

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is
the one who **takes refuge in him.**

Psalm 40:4

Blessed is the one who **trusts in the Lord**, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.

Psalm 84:12

Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in
you.

Psalm 94:12

Blessed is the one you **discipline**, Lord, the one
you **teach from your law**;

Proverbs 16:20

Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and
blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord.

Proverbs 28:14

Blessed is the one **who always trembles** before
God,

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who **heeds wisdom's instruction.**

Jeremiah 17:7

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.

Romans 4:8

Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will **never
count against** them.”

The Beatitudes of Matthew 5 and Luke 6 describe the happy state of those who develops a deep and genuine relationship with God.

Happiness is available for those who love and
fear God and order their lives according to His
Word.

Romans 4:6-8

- (6) David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God **credits righteousness** apart from works:
- (7) “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
- (8) Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

Romans 4:6-8 ties this happy blessing to those whose sins are forgiven, for they know the relationship to God has been restored.

Summation

The immutable right to life, liberty and happiness are God's gift to mankind.

John 10:10

Jesus said in John 10:10 “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

Bringing these threads together, we see that
happiness is a blessing of good will - of
experiencing a close relationship with God.

God's original plan in creation is for mankind to become a member of the Kingdom of God where life, peace and joy reign forever.

The material blessings we enjoy from day to day are temporary, but the spiritual blessings available to us in Christ is eternity.

This is where we find true and lasting happiness.

3 John 1:2

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things
and be in health
just as your soul prospers.