

the PURSUIT of HAPPINESS

We are to delight in God

Aristotle said happiness is the end of human existence. In other words happiness should be the goal of your life.

Where does the world find its pleasure? Where does the world find its happiness? Its satisfaction in life?

If you go to and look at the covers of magazines you get a good idea of what ppl think we need or maybe we want to make us happy.

You seem to be able to narrow it down to 3 things -

- forms of low carb food, ways to burn fat, and rock hard abs.

It often is focused on the physical or material. The right or the best or the latest...car, computer, house, clothes, car, watch.

Or other magazines that tell you it is about having your own dream home.

Or what about reality TV shows that instill in you a lack of contentment and the way to be happy - Domestic Blitz, Extreme Makeover

Or go to the bookshops and the self help section. What should I do with my life? You'll find -

"The everything success book"

"What happy ppl know."

"4 things that matter most".

"Manifest your destiny: The 9 spiritual principles for getting everything you want"

"10 secrets for success and inner peace"

Chief end of man is happiness. Something genuinely human being expressed.

1. We are to seek happiness

In 2 Timothy 3:4 Paul warned that in the last days men would be "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." And surely we are in those days.

Therefore I'd understand if you just responded to the word happiness by thinking come on L-T that is the problem with the world, "Enough of it! Our homes, our schools, our businesses, our society are being destroyed by self-fulfillment seekers. We don't need pleasure; we need a return to integrity, justice, temperance, fortitude, self-control!"

Sometimes an illustration is worth a thousand words. So instead of giving you a precise definition of Christian happiness let me start by giving some Biblical examples of it.

David counsels Christian happiness when he commands, "Delight yourself in the Lord; and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4).

And he demonstrates Christian pleasure when he cries out, "As a deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for thee O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps. 42:1-2).

Moses sought Christian happiness (according to Hebrews 11:24-27)

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. ²⁶He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

WHY? because he rejected the "fleeting pleasures" of sin, but "considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward."

The saints in Hebrews 10:34 knew Christian happiness

³⁴*You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.*

WHY? because they chose to risk their lives to visit Christian prisoners and joyfully accepted the plundering of their own property since they knew that they themselves had a better possession and a lasting one.

The **apostle Paul** commended Christian happiness when he said in Romans 12:8, Let him who does acts of mercy do them with cheerfulness.

And **Jesus Christ** the pioneer and perfecter of our faith set the greatest standard of Christian happiness because "his delight was in the fear of the Lord (Is. 11:3) and, for the **joy** that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2).

The desire to be happy is God-given and should not be denied or resisted but directed to God for satisfaction.

I'm not saying do whatever you enjoy is good. I'm saying that *God has shown you* what is good and doing it ought to bring you joy (Micah 6:8). And since doing the will of God ought to bring you joy the pursuit of joy is an essential part of all moral effort. If you abandon the pursuit of joy you cannot fulfill the will of God.

There is no contradiction in saying, on the one hand, "We are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered" (Rom. 8:36) and on the other hand, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

Christian pleasure seeking does not join the culture of self-gratification that makes you a slave of your sinful impulses. It commands that we not be conformed to this age but that we be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2) so we can delight to do the will of our Father in heaven.

Joy in God is not optional icing on the cake of Christianity. When you think it through joy in God is an essential part of saving faith.

We are to seek happiness in God.

I wanted to share personally to finish. I had a refreshing time on holidays. God refreshed my soul.

He did that by giving me a fresh awareness of the joy he wants me to have in Him.

This happened through reading a book called Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret. This is a book about the personal devotional life of Hudson Taylor the missionary to China. It was God's way of helping me through the testimony of how this man found joy in God by living out the reality of being in Christ and abiding in Him and what that means.

Here is some sections from the book I read of Hudson Taylor's experience:-

"I thought that holiness, practical holiness, was to be gradually attained diligently use of the means of grace. There was nothing I so much desired as holiness, nothing I so much needed; but far from in any measure attaining it, the more I strove after it, the more it eluded my grasp, until hope itself almost died out...

When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed to me the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known if before."

Here is the sentence:- "But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One."

Hudson Taylor continues: - " Ah, there is rest!" I thought. "I have striven in vain to rest in him. I'll strive no more. For has not he promised to abide with me - never to leave me, never to fail me? And he never will."

"How then to have our faith increased? Only by thinking of all that Jesus is and all he is for us: his life, his death, his work, he himself as revealed to us in the Word, to be the subject of our constant thoughts. Not striving to have faith...but looking off to the Faithful One seems all we need; a resting in the Loved One entirely, for time and for eternity."

My desire as a man created in the image of God above all things is that I would find joy in Christ. Resting in him not striving for Him but knowing I have him with me. And that his joy I have would overflow and be known to all those around me.

Reading the Bible and praying and spending time with other Christians are God means of grace not for me to gain more of the treasure but to remind me of the treasure of have in Christ. I have Jesus the vine and the branches I don't need to go striving to gain the sap from the vine.

Joy should overflow from delighting in God as our treasure.

Think of something you experienced or received lately that gave you joy.

Didn't it show that you were happy because of it? Didn't you want to share you joy with others over this?

So having and knowing God as your treasure that brings you joy should overflow so that it shows and you can't wait for chances with people to talk about it.

I want **Belinda** to know that I have joy in God.

I want my **daughters** to know that I have joy in Jesus.

I want the **blokes I cycle** with to know I have joy as a Christian.

I want you as my **church** to know I have joy in your service.

I want **you** to know and grow in the joy you have in Christ.

What difference does this make to life?

This what Hudson Taylor said about his life: -

"I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realise this; for he, I know, is able to carry out his will, and his will is mine. It makes no matter where he places me, or how. This is rather for him to consider than for me; for in the easiest position he must give me his grace, and in the most difficult his grace is sufficient...So, if God should place me in serious perplexity, must he not give me much guidance, in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? No fear that his resources will prove unequal to the emergency! And his resources are mine, for his is mine, and is with me and dwells in me."

So what does that mean for me as I get back into that rhythm of the day to day routine of life?

Here are a few examples for me. I will begin my day in the Bible being reminded of the Faithful and his faithfulness. This will turn to prayer in thanks for his faithfulness to me. I continue through the day receiving what I have as gifts. Even the interruptions from the girls bursting into my office at home. A gift from God.

Unexpected phone call. A gift from God.

An afternoon the arthritis flares up. A gift from God forcing a time of rest.

What about you what might it mean for you?

Here's a few examples I thought of. I wonder what you might think of?

When you walk in the door from work and are asked how your day was instead of grumbling or complaining about something that happened. You could say I am thankful to God for a job.

When you are playing on the park with the kids next stop and give thanks for the park and the equipment, the sun, the sound of the kids laughter.

When you wake up tomorrow morning and put your feet on the floor stop and give thanks that God will provide everything you need for whatever will be in your day. Give thanks for your feet. Give thanks for the floor. Give thanks that you will go to the cupboard and find weetbix. Give for the milk as you pour it on your weetbix. Give for a shower. Give thanks for clothes. Give thanks for a job to go. Give thanks for a car. Give for money to put petrol in the car. Give thanks for Faithful who has provided all this and more in giving you himself.

Here is a part of a letter George Muller wrote to Hudson Taylor:-

“You will always have the Lord to be with you...On him then reckon, to him look, on him depend: and be assured that if you walk with him, look to him and expect help from him, he will never fail you. An older brother, who has known the Lord for forty-four years, who writes this, says for your encouragement that he (God) has never failed him. In the greatest difficulties, in the heaviest trial, in the deepest poverty and necessities, he has never failed me; but because I was enabled by his grace to trust in him, he always appeared for my help. I delight in speaking well of his name.”