

Do You Want to Be Happy?

Philippians 4:4-8

Preface

Illus: If you have ever toured Graceland, you know Elvis Presley had everything. He had great fame and fortune. Six weeks before he died, a reporter asked him, "Hey Elvis, when you first started playing music, you said you wanted to be rich, famous and happy. Are you happy?" "I'm lonely as hell," he replied.

Wealth, power and fame do not bring happiness. In fact, more often than not they are accompanied by great pressure, anxiety and loneliness.

Quote: "Most people spend far more time searching for happiness than they do experiencing happiness."

Deep down inside are you happy or is your heart filled with worry, anxiety and loneliness?

God's Word gives Christians the perfect formula for being happy.

Scripture

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:4-8 NIV

Introduction

I am amazed when I talk with people. Sometimes I can be talking with someone who is very happy and content with life. Then as I speak with them in detail about their past, I discover that they have plenty of reasons to be angry and bitter, yet they are not.

On the other hand, some folks just seem intent being unhappy. They dwell on every bad thing and seem to look right over the reasons they could be happy.

Paul had every reason to be filled with shame and worry. Yet Paul remained steadfast not only in His life's work but in his optimism. He gives us the formula for living happy rewarding Christian lives.

1. Rejoice in the Lord - "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice!" vs. 4

This was one of Paul's favorite sayings. No matter how dark the circumstances, Christians always have plenty reasons to rejoice. Rejoicing is a state of the heart and mind not words from the mouth. Rejoicing is an attitude and perspective that recognizes the ultimate victory has already been won.

Illus: Forrest Gump's mama had it right, "life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get." What we do know is that God is in control.

Illus: In 1997, Steve Fossett was on an adventure to circle the globe in a hot-air balloon. He was flying great until he came to Libya where he encountered a strong headwind and could not move forward. He finally dropped from 24,500 feet to 6,300 feet where he caught a crosswind that took him south around Libya. He later learned that Libya was prepared to shoot him down when he entered their air space.

In the same manner God looks out for His children. What appears to be an inconvenience is often divine guidance that we will one day appreciate.

Our Lord said, "Lo, I am with you always." This means the bright and stormy days of life.

As believers we can rejoice always! Don't wait for everything to be worked out to rejoice. Rejoice now and watch as God is in control.

2. Have the Spirit of Christ – “Let your forbearing spirit (gentleness) be known to all men. The Lord is near.” vs. 5

At one time or another, we have all made the comment, “I don’t care what other people think.” Usually when we say “I don’t care what people think”, we really do care and we are frustrated with our inability to influence other’s opinion.

But, Paul tells us we most definitely should care about what others see in us. They should see a gentle and sincere spirit that comes from our relationship with God.

Real strength is about remaining steadfast in our convictions when the world’s tide flows in a different direction. Strength is about hanging in there when life’s responsibilities become overwhelming and we are tempted to throw in the towel.

The idea here is not that we are to put on a show for others, but rather others should observe the spirit of Christ in us. Others should see a trusting, reasonable, fair minded and charitable spirit in us. Others should see someone who is living for God’s purpose rather than our own.

Illus: I read a true story about a young seminary student who gave a fantastic sermon in his Preaching 101 class. When he received an F for the grade, he was furious. The seminary professor then explained how he had observed the young man’s rude obnoxious behavior recently in town. He then reminded him that his conduct outside the pulpit must reconcile with his words spoken at the pulpit.

To experience happiness in our lives, we must genuinely have the Spirit of Christ.

3. Don’t Worry– “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God.” vs. 6

Worry / Anxious: (Greek – *to be pulled in different directions*, Anglo-Saxon: *to be strangling or choking over concern*).

Why does Paul turn his attention to the matter of worrying? The answer is simple. Worry is Satan’s most effective tool. It is Satan’s best friend for distracting Christians from serving God. Worrying is a powerful disabling device. Worry is like **a disease that shuts us down.** It causes us to **lose site** of our purpose and **become totally self centered.**

Illus: Like a notebook PC in sleep mode, worrying reduces us to a state of bare minimum ability and output.

Over 90% of the things we worry about never happen. We worried for nothing. Worrying is like paying interest on money you never got.

Is worrying a sin? You bet it is. Worry is a subtle form of disbelief in the idea that God is in control. Worry is faith in reverse. No wonder Satan love’s it!

So, **what is the treatment for worry?** It is prayer, supplication and thanksgiving. Paul urges us to put out concerns in perspective before God, make our needs known to Him and trust Him for the outcome.

4. Experience the Peace of God – “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension (understanding), shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” vs. 7

When we pray and trust our concerns to **God, worry is replaced with peace. Not man’s peace but the peace of God. Isn’t peace what we all want?** We desire the peace of knowing we are in the right place in God’s plan and purpose for our lives.

God’s peace is **incomprehensible**. You can’t figure it out or explain it. It is just there and it is a holy place. It is a place that if you have ever been there it is where you always want to be.

God’s peace is nothing of man’s doing. It doesn’t come from positive thinking, self help books or good works. It is present even in the worse of circumstances. God’s peace is a reward for our faith.

God’s peace guards (like a soldier) our hearts and minds. The heart and mind can take us to the pinnacle of enthusiasm or to the pits of despair. The heart and mind can provoke us to commit amazing acts of kindness or flagrant acts **of sin**.

God’s peace is the force that guards our hearts and minds, keeping them pure.

Let the peace that Christ can give keep on acting as umpire in your hearts (Col. 3:15) Wms.

5. Focus on the Right Stuff – “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.” vs. 8

Verse eight reminds us that **we have responsibility in the matter of our joy** and happiness. It is our responsibility to **dwell on things that are of the truth**, proper, honorable, admirable and in accordance with **God’s standards of rightness**.

God’s peace comes from right thinking and right living. Let your mind and heart dwell on the things that are worthy of respect, pure and right. No Christian can afford to waste mind power on destructive things; what one pastor calls, “Stinkin Thinkin.”

Illus: People don’t like to talk about righteousness these days. No one wants anyone else’s standards applied to them even if it is God’s standards. Everyone wants to apply their version of God’s word so that it accommodates their desired lifestyle.

Then, when things do not go right, we figure out a man made solution.

Illus: In the news a politician has come up with this brilliant idea for dealing with the tide of teen abortions in the US. She says we need to teach our children about abstinence. Well Hello! Has she ever heard of the Bible? And wasn’t the Bible taken out of the schools?

The key to peace and happiness is to focus on the things of God.

Conclusion

Illus: A Deacon's recent email ended with: ***"God is so good and totally awesome, Feeling Full of Gratitude and Love."***

That my friend is the place we all want to be.

Just recently someone complained that they were very lonely. This person hasn't set foot in a church in years. No wonder he is lonely. His soul is longing to commune for that which he was created. He has spent a lifetime looking for happiness in the wrong places and things.

Illus: After complaining to my wife that my head itches all the time, she suggested I try a new shampoo. I picked up something different to try it out. This morning was a unique occasion where I put my contacts in before getting a shower. So in the shower, I could see. I started looking at the label on the shampoo and it read; "For frizzy unmanageable hair." I think I have the wrong formula my hair.

Paul gives us the correct formula for finding happiness and joy in our life. Are you happy today? What is wrong in your life? Do you hurt and feel lonely? Are you at peace with God?

Christ wants to put your life back together and restore your joy. Christ wants to walk with you and allow you to become like him and **know his peace.**