

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“The Pursuit of Happiness: Two Maps, One Treasure”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Matt 6:25-31; 13:44; Matt. 5:3-12; Matt. 16:22-25; Prov. 16:25; Ecc. 11:3 Jer. 17:9-10; Matt. 7:13-14; Gen. 2:16-17; Matt. 13:34-35; Ps. 78:1-8, 35-37

In the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson penned a phrase that captures something deeply human and deeply spiritual: “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The pursuit of happiness. But what exactly is happiness? What are we actually chasing? For some, happiness simply means the end of pain. For others, it is love, marriage, acceptance, success, recognition, comfort, wealth, pleasure, or simply feeling like life is finally under control. People are pursuing something. Everyone is chasing some version of fullness.

And yet, over and over again, people achieve what they thought would finally satisfy them—the relationship, the degree, the career, the applause, the house, the money, the comfort—and still find themselves asking, “Is this it? There must be more.” Ecclesiastes 11:3 tells us that God has set eternity in the hearts of men. There is something we are longing for that cannot be manufactured by the work of our hands. So the question is not whether we are pursuing happiness. We all are. The question is: whose map are we following in that pursuit? There are two maps. There are two voices. But there is only one treasure that actually leads to life.

1. THE TREASURE HAPPINESS IS REALLY LOOKING FOR

Yeshua speaks directly to our anxious pursuit of life, security, and provision. In Matt. 6:25-33, He reminds us that our Father knows what we need. The birds do not live outside His care, and the flowers are not forgotten by Him. So Yeshua calls us away from worry-driven living and into trust-driven pursuit: *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matt. 6:33). Those who do not know the Lord eagerly chase after provision, comfort, and security as though those things are the treasure. But Yeshua tells His people to pursue something greater: the Kingdom of God, the righteousness of God, the ways of God, and the heart of God.

Then in Matt. 13:44, Yeshua says, *“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid. And because of his joy, he goes out and sells all that he has and buys that field.”* The Kingdom is worth giving up everything for. Yet when Yeshua describes the character of that Kingdom in Matt. 5, it sounds upside down to the natural mind: humility, mourning, meekness, mercy, purity, peacemaking, hunger for righteousness, and even faithfulness under persecution. To our flesh, that does not always sound like happiness. But Yeshua says this is the treasure. This is the life. This is what the heart is actually searching for, even when it is chasing everything else.

2. THE MAP THE HEART DRAWS CANNOT BE TRUSTED

This is where the pursuit of happiness becomes a matter of trust. The treasure Yeshua describes does not naturally look like the treasure our flesh wants. When Peter confessed that Yeshua was the Messiah, he was right. But when Yeshua began to speak of suffering, death, and resurrection, Peter resisted Him. He could not imagine that the way of God's victory would come through suffering and self-giving love. So Yeshua rebuked him and said, "You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but the things of men" (Matt. 16:23). Peter's instincts sounded reasonable, even protective, but they were drawn from the map of man, not the map of God.

That is why Yeshua immediately says that anyone who wants to follow Him must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him. The world says, "Follow your heart." The Lord says the heart is not trustworthy apart from Him. Prov. 16:25 says, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*" Jer. 17:9 says, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and incurable—who can know it?*" So the question becomes very personal: whose voice will we trust? The voice of our heart, or the voice of the Lord? The true answer is not revealed merely by what we say. It is revealed in the choices we make, especially when His way confronts our desires.

3. THE MAP GOD GAVE TO LEAD US HOME

There is a Voice we can trust. From the beginning, God's voice pointed humanity toward life. His first command was not restriction, but abundance: "*From all the trees of the garden you are most welcome to eat*" (Gen. 2:16). The Lord's heart was generous: "Eat. Live. Enjoy what I have made for you. But trust Me enough not to eat from the one tree that will destroy you." Yet another voice came and questioned the goodness and truthfulness of God's Word. Humanity listened to desire, sight, and appetite above the voice of the Lord, and the result was death, pain, selfishness, and separation.

But the Lord did not abandon us. He gave His instruction as light, as a map, as a treasure map to lead us back to life in His presence. Through His Torah, His promises, His prophets, His parables, His sacrifices, and ultimately through Yeshua, He revealed the way home. Matt. 13:35 says, "*I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world.*" Psalm 78 calls God's people to pass His teaching from generation to generation so that the next generation would put their trust in Him and not forget His works. L'Dor v'Dor, we pass down the map—not as empty religion, but as the way of trust. All of it points us to Yeshua, the One who leads us into the true treasure our hearts were made to find.

CONCLUSION

In the pursuit of happiness—of fullness, blessedness, and true life—there are two treasure maps. There is the voice of the Lord, and there is the voice of your own heart. The map of the Lord leads to life, but it is a narrow road. To our natural thinking, it may look frightening, costly, and difficult. The map of the heart looks delightful, but it is

counterfeit. It promises victory and leads to disappointment. It promises freedom and leads to bondage. It promises life and leads to destruction. So do not trust your heart. Trust the Lord with your heart. Surrender it to Him. Follow His ways.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the most common ways people define “happiness” today, and why do those pursuits often leave people still feeling empty?
2. Why does Yeshua’s description of blessing in Matt. 5 feel so upside down to our natural instincts?
3. In what area of your life are you most tempted to trust your own heart or “common sense” over the voice of the Lord?
4. How do modern messages like “follow your heart” or “do whatever makes you happy” conflict with Jer. 17:9–10 and Prov. 16:25?
5. What does it look like practically to pass the Lord’s “treasure map” from generation to generation in your home, congregation, or community?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, we confess that we have often trusted the voice of our own hearts more than we have trusted Your voice. We have chased happiness, comfort, recognition, pleasure, control, and security, and we have believed that these things could give us the fullness our hearts were made for. Forgive us. Search us. Try our minds. Show us where we have followed the counterfeit map.

Teach us to trust You. Teach us to believe that Your commands are life. Teach us to seek first Your Kingdom and Your righteousness. Lead us by Your voice. Form our hearts. Make us a people who do not merely flatter You with our mouths, but follow You with steadfast hearts. And may we pass this treasure map from generation to generation, so that our children and the children yet to be born will put their trust in You.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.