



“The most important thing is to enjoy your life—to be happy—it’s all that matters.”
-Audrey Hepburn

“Whatever you decide to do, make sure it makes you happy!”
-Paulo Coelho



Happiness Is Neutral

The Bible doesn’t say that happiness is a *problem*.

It also doesn’t say that happiness is a *promise*.

The overall message seems to be that the lifestyle that our world offers gives us temporary happiness at a high long-term cost, but a godly lifestyle give us indescribable joy at a high short-term cost.

How can the pursuit of happiness become an idol that turns us away from God?

THE BIBLE DOESN'T SAY THAT

Phrase #6: “God Wants Me to be Happy”

Does God want you to be happy? When we think about the character and personality with God, the obvious answer is yes—of course he does! What kind of God wouldn’t want me to be happy?

After all, God clearly loves us, sent his son to die for us, offers us his own Holy Spirit to live in our hearts and has given us incredible blessings that we can see all around us. How could God do all of that and want us to be sad, miserable and depressed?

The problem here is that we are conflating God’s unconditional love for us (which is a foundational teaching of the Bible) with the *unbiblical* idea that he wants everyone to be happy all the time.

The danger of saying “God wants me to be happy” is that it leads to extreme self-centeredness, and it implies that God gives tacit or explicit approval to any decision we make—*moral or immoral*—that makes us happier than we were before.

Where Does This Idea Come From?

Ecclesiastes 11:8-9

However many years anyone may live, let them enjoy them all. But let them remember the days of darkness, for there will be many. Everything to come is meaningless.

9 You who are young, be happy while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.”

Ecclesiastes is one of the books of the Bible written by King Solomon near the end of his life. Solomon lived a long a full life as the King of Israel. As the most powerful and wealthy person in the entire Kingdom, Solomon had all kinds of vices at his disposal. Despite being the wisest king to ever rule over God’s people, Solomon frequently gave into the

temptations that came with unquestioned power.

Solomon experienced every sinful and pleasurable thing the world had to offer. In one aspect, Solomon followed in his father David’s footsteps. David, who also ruled as King over Israel, got involved in his own messy affair with another man’s wife. King Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Solomon lived by the idea that God wouldn’t have given him the position of power and authority over Israel if he wasn’t giving his tacit approval to use that power to indulge in sinful behaviors.

At the end of his life, Solomon cautions the young men and women of Israel that they are free to choose a lifestyle that makes them happy, but they will be held accountable for their decisions.

“Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart’s desires.” **Psalm 37:4**

If Our Personal Happiness Was God's Top Priority...

1. Adam and Eve would never have been kicked out of the Garden.
2. Bacon. God wouldn't have outlawed bacon.
3. God would never have asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac
4. Joseph wouldn't have been sold, enslaved, imprisoned, or falsely accused of a crime.
5. There would be a lot of lottery winners every day.
6. The Israelites would have enjoyed generations of long and prosperous life in Egypt under the benevolent rule of Pharaoh.
7. The 10 Commandments would have been re-named to the 10 Suggestions.
8. There would have been a lot more to eat than just manna and quail. Can anyone say sushi buffet?
9. Drive Through Churches Would be a Thing.*
10. David and Bathsheba would have lived happily ever after (along with their first son).

**This was originally written pre-COVID-19, but even then, drive through Communion services were becoming a thing.*

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NLT)

A Call to Holy Living

13 So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. 14 So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. 15 But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. 16 For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."

The Pursuit of Happiness Can Never Be Used as a Justification for Going Against God's Word.

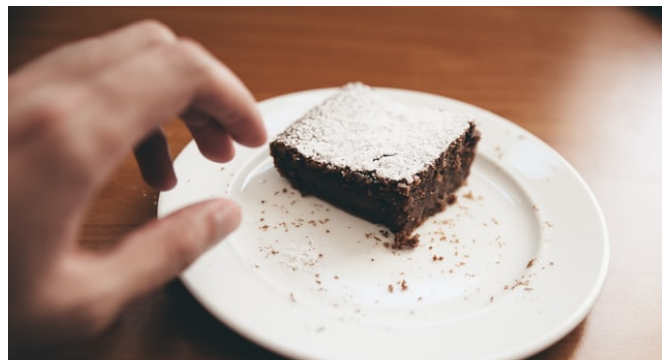
God wants us to experience the best things in life, but the best experience is found by obeying—not ignoring—his Word.

Some people might view Christianity as an overly restrictive set of rules that prevents us from experiencing all of the best things life has to offer. Focusing on the rules and regulations leaves us with the impression that God is a lot like an angry judge or a stern school principal.

A better image of God is a loving Father who wants nothing more than to give his children the very best experience in life.

Psalm 37:3-4, "3 Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. 4 Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires."

For many Christians, the journey into disobedience starts with the belief that



happiness is found somewhere else. The pursuit of happiness becomes a form of idolatry as it replaces the pursuit of holiness as our top priority.

The Psalm 37 passage teaches us that the key to safety, prosperity, and satisfaction (a rather comprehensive definition of what most people mean when they say "happiness") is to trust in the Lord and to delight in him. When we make a close and intimate relationship with God our top priority, God gives us the desires of our heart and leads us to safety and prosperity in our lives.

The key to all of that is allowing God to transform your heart and help you learn to desire the things he desires for you. That process of ongoing spiritual transformation leads us to true joy.

THE MAIN IDEA: HOLINESS OVER HAPPINESS



Our lives here on earth might last 100 years, if we're lucky. Our life after this earth goes on forever. But forever is hard to wrap our minds around. Let's say our life after earth lasted just 1,000,000 years. Now imagine that the length of a football field represented your 1,000,000 years of life after you die. Your entire life on earth would be the **first 1/3 of an inch**, and everything else would be your life in Heaven.

1 Peter 1:15 commands us to "be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy." Holiness is living as a purified person in the presence of God.

God wants us to live holy lives so that we can find true joy and satisfaction in this life and the life to come. Too many of us sacrifice our morals, integrity, families and even our eternal lives based on making the first 1/3 of an inch slightly more enjoyable.

Don't gain the world but forfeit your soul (**Mark 8:36**). Choose holiness over happiness.