

JOY and PEACE have a PRICE

There was a farmer looking to hire a new farm hand, as the man was applying for the job, the farmer asked what are your qualifications?

He said I can sleep through a storm!

The farmer was puzzled by this, he said I asked for your qualifications not were you were sleeping?

But he liked the guy so much, he decided to hire him anyways.

Well, it happened one night a storm came ripping through the valley

And so the farmer woke up and called for his farm hand. And you guessed he was sound asleep.

So the farmer and his wife started looking around the entire farm to check things to make sure that all was secure.

They found that the shutters to the farm house had been secured and fastened.

A good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace.

The farmer and his wife then inspected the property and they found that the farm tools had been placed in the storage shed, safe from the elements.

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The bales of wheat had been bound and wrapped in tarps.

The tractor had been moved into its garages and the barn doors were properly locked tight

Even the animals were calm and had plenty of feed and water.

All was WELL

It was in that moment were the farmer understood what the hired hand meant, that he can sleep through the storms.

You see guys, the lesson that I've learned in that is that it's our perpetration in times of peace

That is the greatest predictor of our behavior in times of war.

The Struggle to Find Joy

Everyone longs for happiness, but few possess it.

The pursuit of it is universal and timeless.

Generations ago, the writers of the United States Declaration of Independence recognized that longing.

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They wrote that every man is endued by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, one of which is the pursuit of happiness.

For most people, however, happiness is elusive.

To make it even more elusive, many Christians have been told that holiness and happiness just don't go together.

That's because in the church, there has been an emphasis placed on Jesus as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.

***Isaiah 53:5 says,
But he was pierced for our sins,
crushed for our iniquity.
He bore the punishment that makes us whole,
by his wounds we were healed.***

Religion likes to quote Isaiah and make His suffering the focus.

Jesus Was Full of Joy and Peace

However, that is not the whole story.

The same Bible that says Jesus suffered also says

He was anointed with the oil of gladness above everyone else and that the joy of the Lord is our strength:

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Hebrews 1:9

***You loved justice and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, anointed you
with the oil of gladness above your
companions”;***

You carry an anointing of Gladness, All that Jesus has you have in fact you have more.

Nehemiah 8:10

He continued: “Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our Lord. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the Lord is your strength!”

No joy—no strength. This is one of the reasons why there are a lot of **weak Christians**.

So, is true happiness obtainable?

And if so, how do we get it?

Rejoicing in Every Circumstance

First, let me say there are many scriptures that command us to rejoice and be glad

(Ps. 32:11, 40:16, 68:3, 70:4, to list a few). Some specifically command rejoicing in the midst of trouble (Ps. 34:1, Matt. 5:12, and John 16:33).

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The people of Israel were even punished because they didn't serve the Lord with joyfulness and gladness of heart for the abundance of all the things the Lord had done.

Deuteronomy 28:47-48

47 Since you would not serve the Lord, your God, with heartfelt joy for abundance of every kind,

48 in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and utter want, you will serve the enemies whom the Lord will send against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck, until he destroys you.

So, if joy was a command and people were punished for not rejoicing, then happiness is something we can control.

Otherwise, the Lord would have been unjust in commanding us to do it.

Today people think happiness is a result, instead of a choice.

The battle of the mind is fierce, and the Joy of the Lord is my strength!

When, the car breaks - Choose Joy, you get to witness to the automotive guy. Choose Joy, that can bless your heart.

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They believe that if they didn't have any problems and if they had an abundance of good things, happiness would be the inevitable result.

That's not true.

Paul's Example of Contentment

Happiness isn't a state of being; it's a state of mind.

A person can be happy when everyone and everything around them is in turmoil.

They can be content no matter what the financial or physical conditions might be.

True happiness and contentment aren't dependent upon circumstances.

Paul is the perfect example

Paul wrote the book of Philippians while he was in prison in Rome.

He had been in prison for two years in Israel, one year in transit to Rome and an undisclosed amount of time in Rome.

He was facing possible execution.

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Yet, his letter to the Philippians is the happiest letter of any he wrote.

He mentioned rejoicing seventeen times in this short letter.

How could this be?

What was Paul's secret?

The book of Philippians gives us the keys Paul used to obtain successful **JOY!**

In ***Philippians 4:11 Paul said,***

Not that I say this because of need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I find myself, to be self-sufficient.

Circumstances Cannot Be Your Source of Joy

Notice that contentment is something the Paul learned.

It didn't come naturally or without effort.

None of us came out of the womb reading and writing; we had to learn through years of effort.

Likewise, contentment, which is a major component of happiness, has to be learned.

It doesn't come on us like a seizure, and we don't catch it like a cold. It is an acquired trait.

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How do we acquire happiness?

First, we need to deal with what's on the inside.

Most people take a the approach of dealing with the outside.

They pray for their problems to be solved and that only good things and good people will come their way.

Let me give you a clue: That ain't going to happen!

Confronting Self-Centeredness

As long as we are in this world, we will have problems

John 16:33

I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world."

And if we are living for God, we will have persecutions according to 2 Tim. 3:12.

If you never bump into the devil, it's because you're going in the same direction.

When you turn around and start swimming upstream, you will always encounter resistance.

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People and circumstance might start working against you.

You can't always control what goes on **outside**, but you can totally control what goes on **inside** when faced with that resistance.

When you understand that, you will have discovered one of the greatest keys to happiness.

In addition, you will be on your way to eliminating grief in your life.

Andrew Wommack written a little book called Self-Centeredness: The Source of All Grief.

It shows how selfishness really is at the root of all our grief.

I know that's a hard pill to swallow for many.

But that's because we live in a society that has learned to blame circumstances and other people, rather than taking personal responsibility.

For example, Proverbs 13:10 makes it very clear that the way others treat us is not the root of contentions; it's our pride:

Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

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Overcoming Self-Love

If we weren't so in love with ourselves, so prideful and self-centered, we wouldn't be so sensitive to all the things that rub self the wrong way.

It really comes down to our love of self.

One of the most liberating things in the world is to love someone else more than yourself.

And when the one you love more is God, you will rejoice when He is glorified, even if that happens through your suffering.

That's what Paul did. In Philippians, chapter 1, Paul was trying to comfort the Philippians.

These were special people to Paul, and he was special to them.

In Philippians 4:15-16, Paul said the Philippians were the only church that ever gave to him after he left their area.

They did this not only once, but they did it twice and would have partnered with him more if they had known where he was.

Finding Joy Despite Trials

Paul wanted to assure them that everything was all right with him.

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How did he do that?

He told them that all his suffering had furthered the kingdom of God.

***In Philippians 1:12-18 Paul says,
12 I want you to know, brothers, that my situation has turned out rather to advance the gospel,
13 so that my imprisonment has become well known in Christ throughout the whole praetorium and to all the rest,
14 and so that the majority of the brothers, having taken encouragement in the Lord from my imprisonment, dare more than ever to proclaim the word fearlessly.
15 Of course, some preach Christ from envy and rivalry, others from good will.
16 The latter act out of love, aware that I am here for the defense of the gospel;
17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not from pure motives, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment.
18 What difference does it make, as long as in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed? And in that I rejoice.***

That says volumes! **Paul loved God and the advancement. of His kingdom** more than he loved himself.

If the kingdom of God was better off because of Paul's imprisonment, then it was all worth it.

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What a great attitude.

We would do well to adopt it.

Putting God and Others First

When God and others are more important to you than yourself, then you are well on your way to happiness.

But if you are all wrapped up in yourself, you make a very small package.

And therein lies the number one obstacle to contentment and happiness.

Most people are addicted to self like addicts are to drugs.

They are never satisfied.

And this self-centered dissatisfaction is Satan's greatest open door for temptation.

He used self-interest to tempt Adam and Eve, even though they lived in a perfect world without a single problem.

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

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And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Genesis 3:3-5

Self Cannot Be Satisfied

Even Jesus' disciples weren't satisfied with Him.

Despite all they had seen Him do, they still wanted more outward proof of who He was.

John 14:8

Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us."

We can never truly satisfy self. We just have to deny it.

We have to die to self and place God and others ahead of self.

That's easier said than done, but once we die to ourselves, happiness is just around the corner.

Second, we need to deal with what's outside, our circumstances.

Paul gave great insight into how to do that in

2 Corinthians 4:17-18, which says,

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17 For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

18 as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.

Paul said his affliction was only light.

He didn't say that because he didn't have problems.

You can read a list of his "light afflictions" in 2 Corinthians 11:23-30.

The list includes beatings with whips and rods, prison, shipwreck, hunger and thirst because of his mission work, and many more.

So, how can we speak about our heavy load when Paul called all his problems, which were much worse than anything we have suffered, just light afflictions? AMEN!

Focus on the Eternal

You see, it's not your problems that are the problem; it's the way you see your problems and the value you place on them that makes them a problem.

Paul said all his afflictions were but for a moment.

That was saying they were short-lived compared to eternity.

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Paul put everything into the perspective of eternity.

Regardless of how bad things are in this life, we have such a wonderful eternity promised to each of us that all our troubles pale in comparison.

***Romans 8:18 says,
I consider that the sufferings of this present
time are as nothing compared with the glory to
be revealed for us.***

Anchoring Joy in Jesus

Our future is so bright, we have to squint to look at it.

All the sufferings of this life are short and insignificant compared to eternity and all the pleasures the Lord has in store for us. Keeping this in mind will shrink our problems down to a manageable size.

Paul also said in 2 Corinthians 4:18 that he didn't look at the temporary things of earth but that he was focused on the eternal things of heaven.

If we are only looking for happiness in this life, then we are going to be miserable (1 Cor. 15:19).

Our true happiness lies in Jesus and our future with Him. If we are in faith, we can have joy unspeakable and full of glory now, in this life (1 Pet. 1:8).

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It's our anchor in eternity that keeps our hearts from being troubled (John 14:1-3).