

HAPPINESS



"All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves." – Blaise Pascal (17th century French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and theologian)

1. What God says about happiness

1.1. (Pro 29:18) = Happiness happens when we know and keep God's Law (e.g. Gen 4:1-7).

1.2. (Deu 30:8-16) = We can know and keep God's Law (and be abundantly blessed! Pro 28:20).

1.3. (Mat 22:36-40) = The entirety of God's Law can be summarized as what it takes to operate in a loving relationship w/God and God's people (neighbor = God's people; Lev 19:17-18).

2. The conclusions we can draw based on what God says about happiness

2.1. The entirety of God's Law/Word is for the purpose of our happiness.

2.2. God is glorified or happy when His people are genuinely happy (i.e. happy b/c they follow His Word/Law) (Rom 11:36).

2.3. Happiness is all about having loving relationships (w/God and His people).

2.4. The more I grow in my relationship w/God and w/God's people, the happier I wb.

2.5. Growing in my relationship w/God's people SB easy since we have the same things in common: we are both passionate about God and His people (passion = love = the 2 greatest commands).

2.6. The world's recipe for happiness ("The more I focus on loving self, the happier I wb") is wrong.

Proof that self-love does not lead to happiness: this is the place we started when we were born yet we spent a large portion of our time crying, spanked and having to be taught to share b/c we are so selfish. Additionally, people who continue to act like what they were when they were born we call "babies" and "selfish/self-centered". Even pagans know this is not someone we should desire to be. More importantly, the Bible makes it clear that such self-love is idolatry or self-worship. Idolatry is never equated w/happiness – only pain and regret.

2.7. The world's recipe for happiness ("The more experiences I have, the happier I wb") is wrong.

Parents you need to avoid being sucked into this trap w/your kids and risk wasting their time on what will not bring personal happiness or happiness to God. Your focus for them sb on those activities/actions which establish/strengthen and grow their relationship w/God and His people. The same is true for us as adults (don't be a fool! – Pro 17:24).

2.8. The reason the world struggles w/guilt, depression and unhappiness is b/c it doesn't know or keep God's Law.

We cannot escape that fact that we have been made to reflect His image/character. Any deviation from accuracy in this area therefore creates "tension" in our being. That "tension" we identify as guilt, depression and all other terms related to unhappiness.

2.9. The reason the world ---and many in the church, struggle w/guilt, depression, unhappiness, feeling like they don't fit in -- or are outsiders, is b/c they seek to LOVE SELF thru possessing things and experiences (incl. personal success or achievement) rather than love God and His people thru growing those relationships.

This is the difference between (what I call) a ride versus relationship view of life or heaven: 1) Life = (ride view) my happiness is det'd by the scope of my experiences/things possessed versus (relationship view) the depth of my relationship w/God and His people 2) Heaven = (ride view) it is the object of my happiness versus (relationship view) it is the location of my happiness ("heaven is a change of place not company"). A great way to determine which tends to be your view is by simply reflecting on what gets you most excited in this life – or in your thoughts about heaven. Is it spending time w/the saints - or God, growing closer in your relationship? OR is your excitement found in the possession of things/experiences (Is it the ball-game or spending time w/friends fellowshiping at the ball-game?). Original sin guarantees that the way we enter this world WB w/a focus on the former. Hence the reason the Bible says "folly is bound up in the heart of the child" and it is the parent's job to drive it FAR from them - LEST they continue to pursue it in their adult years and the end up UNHAPPY and DAMNED human beings.

2.10. You can't grow in your relationship w/God or His people unless you actively seek to know and keep/be faithful to God's Law/Word and His people.

Getting to know God's people happens in the same way it does in getting to know God – By learning about them thru listening to their words (which means us asking for that information!)

CLOSING CONTEMPLATION = Do you believe what God says about *where* happiness is found? Your actions reveal the answer!