

Perhaps you are like many and would like to relive your life knowing what you learned the first time. Sometimes we call this 20-20 hindsight. Many would say, “*If I could live my life all over, I think I would focus on happiness instead of things. I would want to live a truly happy life and die a happy death.*” They are looking for that happiness you enjoy while living and that you take with you after you die. For the righteous, death simply marks the beginning of never ending happiness. God wants you to be happy, but He wants it to be His kind of happiness. Maybe Psalms 1 can help us to that end.

The psalm begins with the word “Blessed” which means happy. ***Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly...*** The psalmist tells us that happiness really depends on a God-centered life. It really has little to do with wealth/possessions/social position. All of these things are peripheral and bring temporary happiness. We know this is the case by observing the rich/powerful that are not happy. Things do not provide true happiness. There are several things in this Psalms that we will notice that will tell us how to be truly happy.

First. Happiness is found in favoring the right people.

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. Here we have described three groups of people. We might call them “the wrong crowd.” They are the (1) the skeptic, (2) the sinner and (3) the scornful. **The skeptic is described as “ungodly.”** He is the person that has no room for God in his life – he is NOT godly. There are many that live that way. They are not “anti-godly” but simply “ungodly.” 96% of the people in our society today claim to believe in God (4% atheists). A high percentage of that 96% live ungodly; they live as if God doesn’t exist even though they know better intellectually. Recent slogans of the atheists is “*Do Yourself A Favor – Sleep In On Sunday.*” While the majority is opposed to atheism, a vast majority of the people follow their advice. They sleep in on Sunday because they have little room in their lives for God.

The sinner. This is a person that is unholy. This person knows that he is living ungodly and it doesn't bother him. He could care less that he is going against the will of God. Many today don't try to conceal their sinful lifestyle - in fact they often flaunt it and seem to be proud of it. It may be a marital affair, sexual prevision, illegitimate pregnancy, etc. They seem to be proud of their sinful behavior.

The scornful. The word scornful had reference to a dog's snarl/growl. It has been expanded to mean a ridicule/mockery of someone. There are those that mock God, sin, and the idea of a right & wrong standard. These three groups of people are the kind that leads us away from God and away from true happiness. Vs 1 tells us not to walk with such people. Notice the progression in vs 1. You walk, you stand, and you sit. Progressively you become more involved with the wrong crowd. You listen to the wrong crowds and then you begin to hang around them and before you know it you have joined in with them and embrace their attitudes/perspective on things. It always works that way. If you want to be happy, you will not go to the world to determine what your values/attitudes on life will be. *Walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.* Listening to the world's advice has led to broken marriages, unwanted pregnancies, immodest appearance, and unhappy people. Instead of listening to the world, let us listen to the Word for our advice and direction in life.

Secondly, real happiness comes from following the right principles. Look at v. 2 and note that instead of walking after the ungodly; standing with the sinner; sitting with the scornful, But *his delight is in the law of the LORD.* His delight is doing what God wants him to do. This is a person who studies the will of God so as to be the type person God wants him to be. There is a happiness that comes from being in the right relationship with God that you cannot find anywhere else. It is a deep satisfaction of the soul. Among other things, the word of God was written to give you true happiness. *1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.* This means when God says not to do something,

He in essence is saying “*don't hurt yourself*” and when he tells you to do something He is basically telling you to help yourself to happiness. The word of God is to give us eternal happiness.

A fella was telling about learning to play golf and he said that it brought more frustrations than happiness. But after a while he decided to take some golfing lessons and he read some books on how to play and as he learned more on what to do and not to do, the better he played. His score improved and he wasn't in the sand-trap quite as much and the more his game improved the happier he was. That's the way it is with God's will/word. The more you learn about the will of God and the more you do what you learn the happier you will be.

That means it's more than simply reading the Bible like the newspaper. We pick up the newspaper and skip around and read articles of interest and then we lay it down and forget about it. But God's word is different. In order to be blessed by it we need to think about what we read and make application to our lives. So the Psalmist says ***2b and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*** When you start reading/studying the will of God and meditating on it with the intent of letting it shape your character, you will discover what true happiness really is.

Thirdly, happiness comes from fulfilling God's purpose. V3 describes the person that begins to live as God would have him to live. ***V3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*** The word of God will bless you in a couple of ways that is described by comparing a righteous man to a tree. A tree does two things. (1) It takes root and (2) it bears fruit. The righteous man ***shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.*** It's difficult to uproot a well established tree. So it is with the man that delights and meditates on God's word day and night. He is a man of conviction with consistent behavior, and you cannot uproot that faith.

Not only is the happy righteous man deeply rooted, he also bears fruit. **v3b. *That bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.***

This does not describe the ungodly. ***Psalms 1:4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*** The life of the ungodly is like the chaff that the wind blows here and yond. Every life bears fruit. Some of it is ripe and some of it is rotten. Consider the agriculture practices of the day. They would go to the field and harvest their grain after which they would take it to the threshing floor. They would find a flat spot on a hill where there was usually a wind blowing and there they would pour out all the grain. After the grain was on the ground, they would trample it either by animals or some heavy threshing object that would crack the cornels thus separating the grain from the husk/chaff. The problem was the chaff was still mixed in with the good grain. They needed to be separated. So they would get some windowing forks/shovels and toss a shovel full up into the air and the breeze would catch the light chaff and blow it away, leaving only the good grain. Any chaff that piled up near the threshing spot was collected and burned. The chaff was worthless. This simply reminds us that there are people who go thru life and waste it as far as being productive for God. The ungodly is like chaff.

But the righteous man bears fruit. He lives a life that has value to God. The righteous man lives a life that makes a difference not only in the here-and-now but for all eternity. The righteousness man will be rewarded for his commitment. That's the secret of happiness. It's found on the spiritual reality of a right relationship with God.

Several years ago Billy Graham wrote an autobiography about his life entitled Amazing Grace. In that book he told about visiting an island on one occasion and living on that island was one of the wealthiest men in the world. Learning of the Graham's visit, the rich man invited them to dinner and Graham said he couldn't help but notice this man in his mid seventies looked so sad and at times near tears. Later on the man confessed to Graham that he was most miserable. He couldn't figure out why

he was not happy. He said that he had all money could buy and could go wherever he wanted to go. He had a jet airplane, several helicopters, and a yacht in the harbor. He had servants and gardeners yet he was not happy.

After their visit, Graham and his wife returned to the little cottage where they were staying and later one of the island preachers came by to visit with them. He too was 75 years old and the Graham's were impressed with his vigor and enthusiasm for life in spite of his circumstances. He was a widower that spent a lot of time taking care of invalid sisters who were unable to take care of themselves. He didn't have much materially and was just able to scrape by. He said, "You know, I don't have two dollar bills to rub together, but I believe I am the happiest man on this island."

After he left, Billy Graham turned to his wife and said, "We've met two men today. Which do you think is the richest?"

If you look for happiness in material things, you will be most miserable and disappointed. Happiness is found in having a right relationship with God. Does that describe you?

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (14) For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Invitation.