

An Old Plan for Happiness

By T. Sean Sullivan

Everyone wants to be happy; it has been a human need forever. There is, no doubt, a need for hard times and sad times; times that cause us trouble. Solomon said, “Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better” (Ecc. 7:3). But we also need to come through those days with hope of being “better” as Solomon said. We need to take on the brighter outlook of happiness. To help each of achieve successful happiness, we need to know that God wants you to be happy.

Throughout the Bible we will find instructions toward happiness. It is our goal in this lesson is to understand an ancient plan for happiness found in Psalm 128:1-2. This passage proclaims that we can be happy if we fear Him—we respect Him; we walk in His ways—we apply His directions; we partake of the fruit of our labor—we see the intended results. So let’s open this passage, and some others, to consider these thoughts.

Respect God to be Happy. Fear doesn’t sound too happy, unless we understand it has a different meaning than what we normally apply to it today. Fear in this passage is from the Hebrew term “yare” (yaw-ray) which means “morally reverent”. In other words, one who keeps the rules of God’s will with reverence (Heb. 12:25-29).

We are to fully respect God at His word—knowing His word is nothing less than truth (John 17:17; Titus 1:2). This means we do not argue with God or worry about having to calculate every notion of His will with precise understanding—we simply trust and obey. Some want spend time wondering how water washes away sins—instead of focusing on trusting God and doing what He commands (Mark 16:15-16).

Our Creator God knows us much better than we know ourselves. He knows what we need, at a most essential level. His will is perfectly suited to direct us in every good way. His word prepares us for every good work (Eph. 2:10; 2Tim. 3:17). His word teaches us how to be freed from darkness and find the light (Rom. 2:4; Eph. 5:8-10). To discover the happiness that God provides, His word must be reverently followed.

Apply His directions to be Happy. The passage said, “Walk in His ways”; walking is a constant analogy throughout the scriptures that represents “life” and “living”. In our “walk of life”—our conduct—we need to use God as our guide. How often have you heard men pray in our gathering and use the phrase “Guide, guard, and direct us”. This very poetic petition is exactly what is needed to seek the happiness of Psalm 128:1-2. To walk in His ways, we must seek God’s guidance (Psalm 31:1-5). We must seek the protections of His will (Matt. 6:13; 1Cor. 10:13). We must seek with diligence His directions (Matt. 7:13-14).

There is happiness in God’s ways. His forgiveness allows us to rid our lives of guilt—guilt destroys happiness, relief revives it. His higher moral standard, keeps us from living in regret or remorse. Also, the knowledge that His path leads to everlasting life—provokes happiness (John 14:6). The greater reality we all need to accept is that you, yourself, are fully able to achieve success and happiness in the doing of God’s will (2Peter 3:9).

Find the Intended Results and be Happy. Hoping and dreaming; planning and preparing, will never provide you with fruit to pick, eat, and satisfy your needs. We actually have to plant the tree, water it, prune it, and nurture it—then the fruit will be seen and the partaking can begin. The same goes for our life in Christ. We can know what the Bible says, we can even plan on doing what it says some time, but if we do not actually do it we will never reap its fruits.

The results of faithful service all produce happiness. There are great results from honesty, integrity, and righteousness (2Tim. 3:16-17). There are great results from morality, determination, and self-control (Acts 24:25). The fruits of repentance are sweet (Matt. 3:8). Ultimately we will reap if we do not lose heart (Gal. 6:9).

In conclusion, we want to be happy; God wants us to be happy. In His word, He instructs us in the ways of happiness. We have examined just one verse about being happy, which tells us to respect God, walking in His ways, and seek the fruit it brings.

Searching for happiness is not wishful thinking—we can achieve success in all of the instructions that God provides. One man, many years ago found the rejoicing of happiness through obedience to Christ—the Ethiopian Eunuch went on his way happily after his obedience to the Lord. Do you seek happiness? The opportunity to achieve happiness through obedience is yours right now.

Something More Useful

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Heb. 12:3).

In 1923, as Russian-born engineer Vladimir Zworykin worked on his latest invention, he was told to "spend your time on something more useful." But Zworykin didn't -- and in 1929 he obtained the first patent for his invention, color television. Among his many achievements, Zworykin also helped perfect the electron microscope and other devices that greatly advanced medical and biological research. He retired as director of electronic research for RCA in 1954, and in 1966 was awarded the National Medal of Science. Zworykin's track record makes his employer's criticism seem foolish.

Let us not let petty criticism discourage us from living the Christian life. Consider Jesus who endured great hostility inflicted by the wicked.

Someone More Memorable

The death of C. S. Lewis on November 22, 1963, has long been overshadowed by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on the same day. While the anniversary of Lewis' death rarely makes the headlines, the worldwide impact of this British scholar, teacher, and author continues to grow 40 years after his passing. His books sell more than 3 million copies a year and the most famous, *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and *The Chronicles Of Narnia*, have been reprinted several dozen times.

Converted to Christianity as an adult, Lewis put his keen mind and imagination to work in the service of the Lord. As a well-known writer and speaker, he continued a simple lifestyle. Michael Nelson wrote in the *International Herald Tribune*: "Two-thirds of his book royalties were earmarked for charities. He never traveled abroad, even when fame brought invitations to lecture from around the world."

Lewis exemplified humble service, generosity, and steadfast labor for the balance of his life. Ironic that the world chooses a Kennedy to remember and imitate while a Lewis goes unnoticed. But that is how Lewis would have wanted it. Historians keep the subjective records on earth for a few years; God keeps the accurate records in heaven until Judgment Day.