

# Synthetic Happiness

. . . sounds a little unreal and unappealing, but General Andrew Hansen forwarded the following link to a *TedTalk* making a reasonable case for the reality of what the speaker terms as Synthetic Happiness:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_gilbert\\_asks\\_why\\_are\\_we\\_happy](https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_asks_why_are_we_happy)

He makes some good points (and His examples are very interesting), telling and showing synthetic Happiness is as “real” as natural Happiness. But He left us without a strong how we can “manufacture” synthetic Happiness.

The only known “how to be/become happy” is to be/become thankful for Happy People are Thankful People and Thankful People are Happy People! And while some people are naturally more positive and grateful than others, everyone can develop/enhance thankfulness/Happiness through a discipline of thankfulness (rehearsing and replaying thankfulness over and over and over) and, in the process, putting more happy in our hands from a practical standpoint.

While we might think those who are the happiest/most satisfied are less focused on Better, exactly the opposite is counter-intuitively the case. A teenage boy thrilled with his car will pamper it (just as a husband or wife happy with their spouse will look for and find more ways to bless and make them happy so that, in the process, both are happier!). On the other hand, those thinking they are entitled to more and better tend to be unmotivated and unenthused about devoting any more energy to what previously made them so happy. Thankfulness/Happiness is a catalyst for seeking Better and when we find our Happiness waning it is important we take notice and re-implement a conscious discipline of thankfulness (giving it a double-barrel shot of the disciplines of thankfulness and Better) believing that we will reap Happiness if we re-start the discipline (working it even, and especially, when we don’t really feel like it) of conscious thankfulness and looking for and working on ways to make things Better, bringing us back to the equilibrium of Happiness we previously had or higher!

Unhappy people look at results and feel they deserve/are entitled to more while happy people look at results and feel they have been GIVEN more than they deserve – and the greater the difference (coming up short in entitlement for the unhappy – receiving more than deserved for the happy) the more unhappy/happy they WILL be. In other words, we can be happier as we develop and “work” a thankful discipline more and more just as, if our trajectory is to unhappiness, without repentance to thankfulness, discontent will continue and likely increase over time.

And where do we best find the reminders of true and important blessings and Graces (and an all-important Whom to be thankful to)? Only in the *Bible* of course! A great miracle paradox of the *Bible* is that it humbles any sincere reader by showing how small and insignificant, selfish, underserving . . . we are while simultaneously encouraging, comforting, providing hope as God, in it, promises us the possibility of becoming His children (no, not everyone is a child of God, only those “born again”) with all the rights and privileges (the Grace) this offers now and forever.

And God’s great delight? That we heed the *Bible’s* great call to faith and Grace:

“I [Jesus] tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Mt 18:3-4

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2Pe 3:18

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence. <sup>Heb 4:16</sup> Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. <sup>Heb 10:26</sup>

What the speaker terms “synthetic” may, in fact, be the only real (and historically known and understood) Happiness. The real issue with “Happy People are Thankful People and Thankful People are Happy People” is not the question of whether it is true or not (it will obviously ring true to anyone considering it for even a moment), rather it has become increasingly difficult to find how we can be thankful (as God has become less real and less important to more and more people, even to many professing to be Christians) since it is hard to be thankful to “luck” or our hard work – in the first case, we cannot depend on luck and chance in the future and in the latter we fall back on, at a minimum, feeling we have earned what we have and deserve it (if not more).

We can never in this life fully appreciate all of God’s Grace, any more than a small child will completely comprehend their parent’s love and grace for them until much later in life. But if we begin to grasp the fullness of God’s Grace it is possible to develop (sow) an improving discipline of taking and valuing all God offers and does for us and, in the process, sowing thankfulness to Him and reaping Happiness.

So, the “how” of Happiness?

- Develop a discipline of thankfulness.
- Look to God as the One to Whom we are most thankful.
- Read His Word, in a consistent and disciplined manner, to be reminded of our real and important needs and Christ’s promises to abundantly fulfill them.
- Rehearse these promises and replay His Grace over and over as reminders of all we have to be thankful for – most especially the eternal salvation of our souls!

## Sow Thankfulness • Reap Happiness!

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. <sup>Gal 6:7-8</sup>