

CAFETERIA HAPPINESS

Avoiding Future Shock

If only – the theme of the material perfectionist. But, sadly the theme is only a dream, a mirage, it never comes to pass.

If we analyze happiness and its examples we see it is now "based." Happiness does not look forward to when or what might be, it understands now or never.

The cafeteria approach says: "If I could have this job, that house, the other spouse, better education, some savings . . . I would be happy." Happiness, like love, is spiritually based. It may appear like "the real thing" but infatuation is superficial and fleeting, based on outer appearances rather than substance.

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32

And what better way to find it than to look at the examples and guidance of the Bible? The Bible uses the word happy and happiness several times. In addition, it uses the word "blessed" [bless´ed] which in some versions is also translated "happy."

It is not coincidental that bless´ed [happy] and blessed [blest – to guard, keep and protect] are spelled the same way. That's the point. If we research the use of these 2 words in the Bible we find true and lasting happiness is the result of being blessed by God.

Blessed are those you choose
and bring near to live in your courts! Psalms 65:4

Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work – this is a gift of God. Ecclesiastes 5:19

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry . . . Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Psalms 2:12

Not surprisingly the teachings on happiness parallel that on "which all the Law and Prophets hang:"

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love

your neighbor as yourself.'" Matthew 22:37-40

Happiness results from loving God and your fellow man, and acting accordingly; being proclaimed righteous by God, not by the World.

Love the LORD

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered. Psalm 32:1

Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Psalm 34:8

Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust,
who does not look to the proud . . . Psalm 40:4

Blessed are those who dwell in your house . . . Psalm 84:4

Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. James 5:13

Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you . . . Psalm 89:15

Love your fellow man

Blessed is he who has regard for the weak . . . Psalm 41:1

Blessed are they who maintain justice,
who constantly do what is right. Psalm 106:3

I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. Ecclesiastes 3:12

As ourselves

Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the
way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.
But his delight is in the
law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers. ^{Psalms 1:1-4}

Blessed are they
whose ways are blameless,
who walk according to the law of the LORD. ^{Psalms 119:1}

But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God;
may they be happy and joyful. ^{Psalms 68:3}

Then our Spirits can understand, by faith, what our "natural"
[sinful/material] nature tells us is impossible:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ^{Matthew 5:3-10}

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has
stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to
those who love him. ^{James 1:12}

Are these statements unreasonable and theoretical? Does Christianity
only "work" when things are going well or is it even more relevant in times
of trouble? What examples do we have for handling the problems of life,
those material imperfections that are nuisances or, worse, devastating?
Paul said of one of his many problems:

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he

said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest in me. 2 Corinthians 12:9

There are blessings that come with adversity. But, we don't pick and choose to our desire. When problems come to Christians we are promised grace – grace tailor-made to be sufficient to meet what we face. Not necessarily what we can understand and want, yet, what we need.

We see examples regularly of those feeding on the best of the world's cafeteria lines without any satisfaction. Others, on the hand, face problems with the Spiritual strength of grace. Happiness and misery cannot coexist – unhappiness focuses on what is not perfect while happiness spotlights how I am blessed.

In short, happiness is the result of recognizing and acknowledging we are blessed; which should be easy for all Christians since we know we have been, are, and will continue to be blessed!