



“Does God Want Me To Be Happy?”

Kevin Presley

Does God want you and me to be happy? That may seem like a strange question. But it's a question many people ask. Some ask it cynically: *if God really wants me to be happy, why does He let bad things happen to me?* As if He wanted them to be happy, He would smooth the road and give them a primrose path to walk down all of their lives. Others ask the question presumptuously. In other words, they decide that they want a particular thing or to live a certain way, then justify their behavior by asking, *doesn't a loving God just want us all to be happy?*

Well, the short answer is, yes. God does want you to be happy. But God's definition of happiness and your definition of happiness may be two entirely different things.

Proverbs 3:13 “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.”

What is this happiness? And is it God's ultimate desire for you and me to be happy? The answer in God's word may surprise you.

Have you ever heard someone justify a decision that involves sin by saying, *this can't be wrong because it makes me happy. And God just wants me to be happy.*? Well, it's one of the most common excuses that people make today in this very shallow, self-centered, narcissistic era in which we live. For example, a man leaves his wife or vice versa for another person, which, according to the word of God, is adultery.

Matthew 19:9 “...Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery...”

I Corinthians 6:9-10 “...Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers... shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

Yet, the guilty party will often say, *yes, but I'm not happy with my husband/wife and this other person makes me so happy. I don't think God wants me to be miserable, so He'll understand and approve.* Others will try to justify homosexual relationships in the same way, and just about any other kind of sinful lifestyle that they say makes them happy. Instead of remembering and fearing the holiness and the righteousness of God, we've turned Him into an all benevolent, easygoing genie in a bottle who considers our wishes to be His commands.

Well, God doesn't approve of ANY behavior or lifestyle that violates what is written in His word; let's be clear about that. So, does God want us to be unhappy? Does He want us to be miserable in the lives that we have to live here? Does he find some fiendish pleasure in denying us our pleasures and our happy pursuits in life? The short answer is, no. God doesn't set out to deny us pleasure, and He doesn't desire for us to lead miserable lives. Rather, God wants us to live lives of abundant joy, peace and blessedness.

Romans 15:13 "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

It isn't that God doesn't want us to be happy; He does. But we may be mistaking physical and temporary pleasure for happiness. Worst of all, could it be that we're referring to *lust, greed and selfishness* when we speak of the so-called happiness that we claim that God wants us to have? The happiness that God desires for us is often entirely different and far exceeds the shallow and fleeting felicity that people often call happiness today. The Lord actually wants all of us to possess what the Bible calls *joy or blessedness*. There is a big, big difference. Counterfeit happiness is based upon one's circumstances, and is a fleeting emotion. Whereas, joy is deep and abiding and unshakeable. The person who finds pleasure in drinking or drugs, for example, experiences that pleasure when he/she is drunk or high, but not so much when the ugly consequences of those vices appear. The fallout that accompanies drunkenness and drug addiction isn't pleasant. A night on the town where the booze is flowing may seem like a good time, but what about when someone destroys their marriage, their children, their career, through addiction, or when someone is killed in an accident? Or when drug use leaves a person destroyed, or alcoholism leaves a person's liver filled with cirrhosis and a body wasted, and ultimately, when the sinner loses his soul in eternal condemnation?

Proverbs 13:15 "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard."

A life of sin isn't what the devil has convinced so many people that it is. Solomon rightly says, *the way of the sinner is difficult.*

Someone says, *but that adulterous affair or marriage makes me happy.* What about when you're betrayed later by the adulterer that you've chosen? You see, there's temporary pleasure, but there's no real happiness or fulfillment in sin. It just seems like it when we want it. I'm very likely talking to someone right now with a life that is a wreck. Broken, discarded marriages, problems and heartache from children who are the victims of those broken homes and your foolish decisions. Shattered dreams, a bleak future. If you're honest, you can see how sin deceived you. It promised happiness, but you don't have any real happiness. There's no joy or peace in your heart today. That's because sin doesn't produce those things. *The way of the transgressor is hard.* True peace and true joy, on the other hand, come from things with eternal value, and a right relationship with God.

The rich, pleasure-seeking King Solomon learned that lesson.

Ecclesiastes 1:14 “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

I want us to see what the wise man was talking about in that verse. Look what he went on to say in chapter 2.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-10 “I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards. I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.”

What a life! Many would say that is an enviable life! Solomon was one of the richest men to ever live. He said he seized every kind of pleasure that the world could possibly offer. But was his life really all that enviable? Look at **verse 11**.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.”

Our world leads us to believe that happiness and blessedness come from money, an exciting career, fame, some sexual relationship, good health, the acquisition of things...just a life that goes according to all of our plans and dreams. But, the reality is that relationships fall apart. Health slips away. Money can vanish overnight. Fame is nothing more than a passing fad. The wise King Solomon learned that to chase these things in pursuit of happiness is like chasing after the wind.

BUT, a right relationship with God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, plants a joy in our hearts that circumstances, other people, trials, calamities, and other things CANNOT take away. That’s why Paul could say this when he recalled all of his trials and adversities as an apostle and preacher of the gospel:

II Corinthians 6:10 “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

Now, that’s the kind of happiness that God wants you to enjoy, and that’s REAL happiness. That’s happiness that isn’t dependent upon circumstances; happiness that stays with you and abides deep within you, regardless of what happens outside of you.

The Bible uses a word that some translate *happy*. It's the word *blessed*. Jesus wants us to be blessed, and to lead blessed lives. He wants us to live in a state of blessedness, and I can assure you that that doesn't come through adultery, fornication, or living in any other kind of sin. Jesus never taught *blessed are those who ignore the teachings of scripture, but do whatever they think will make them happy*. That is not what Jesus taught. Rather, He gave the keys to blessedness when He preached His famous sermon on the mount. He began that great sermon by stating what are called "The Beatitudes." Eight great statements that pointed to life in the kingdom and to a right relationship with God.

Matthew 5:3-11 "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

Do you realize that Jesus was saying, "Happy are the poor in spirit...Happy are they that mourn...Happy are the meek...Happy are those who hunger and thirst after the things of God...Happy are the merciful, and so forth. Not many people would read Jesus' list of beatitudes and say that that sounds much like happiness to them. Poor in spirit, meek, merciful, persecuted—how in the world would those things describe a happy life?

Well, when you stop to think about what those things really are, they certainly add up to a happy life. All of those qualities that Jesus spelled out as necessary to gain entrance to His kingdom do the following: they root out selfishness, unholy pride, hatefulness, bitterness, wickedness...and all of those things destroy happiness.

But the beatitudes are not some list of light, fluffy platitudes that basically add up to "Be a nice person." That's not what they're about at all. Rather, they describe the kind of person who seeks the kingdom of God, who seeks to know the truth, who seeks a right relationship with God, and thus with others. This kind of happiness is not something that you have to be rich or famous or fortunate to enjoy. Listen: every single person can have this kind of happiness! Every single person can live in this state of blessedness! Not by living for self, or living for selfish lusts and pleasures and desires; but by living for the things that last, and that bring eternal riches and reward.

Look again at what Jesus said to the multitude in the passage above. *Blessed are the poor in spirit: Why? for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: Why? for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: Why? for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: Why would that be? for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: Why would the merciful be happy? for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: Why would that be, Lord? for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: Those who seek peace with God and others are happy, but why? for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: Why in the world would a person be considered blessed and happy if they're persecuted for the sake of righteousness? for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* You see, there's a reward. That's blessedness. That's happiness. That's joy. All of those things are things worth striving for and worth having. Being a child of God, knowing your ultimate purpose and destiny, regardless of the uncertain changes and challenges of this short, burdensome, toil-stricken life.

I don't care where you've been or what kind of life you've lived up until now. Your life may be a wreck. Maybe your past is littered with failure and regret. Your history may be dotted with one defeat after another. Perhaps when you look into your heart right now, there's not one bit of peace and certainty within. There's a gaping void in your heart and your life because you've exchanged the happiness and the blessedness of knowing God and the confidence of His word for the passing, fleeting pleasures of sin. But that can all change today. God absolutely wants you to be happy, but you won't know that happiness outside of His perfect and holy will. When you use your imagined happiness as an excuse to sin and evade God's will, you're not making Him your God; you're doing what Paul said those enemies of the cross of Christ were doing:

Philippians 3:19 “Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

What's he saying about them? Literally, they worship themselves and their own desires and passions and appetites. Their god is their belly and they glory in that, which is their shame. Look at the next verse.

Philippians 3:20 “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”

God wants you to be happy, but sin and its unrighteousness is NOT where that happiness is found. A life living for self and pleasure is not where it's found. Rather, having your sins forgiven, being a new creature in Christ, being born again, having a clean conscience, having an eternal hope and a purposeful, meaningful life—THAT, my friend, is where happiness is found. It's found walking in the light of His word, and thus in fellowship and agreement with Him, instead of stumbling and groping in the darkness of sin and carnality. Don't buy into the lie of our culture, that repentance and holiness doesn't matter; that God doesn't care how you live as long as you're happy. He wants you to have real happiness. Jesus offers you true happiness today, if you'll repent of your sins and turn to Him in obedience and submission.

Matthew 11:28-30 “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

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