

Is This It? Isn't There Something More?

“Is There More To Happiness?”

(Part 5)

Intro: How many times have you heard someone say...or have you said...”I just want to be happy!” I don't think that's a bad desire. Who doesn't want to be happy? BUT, how do we find it? Once we find it...how do we keep it? Happiness can be like trying to hang on to water in your hand. It just slips through your fingers.

- Happiness has to be based upon something more than just favorable circumstances. If we have to have everything go our way in order to be happy, we will rarely be happy.
- Happiness is NOT a pursuit. It is NOT a destination. Happiness is NOT the goal of life. Happiness is a byproduct. A byproduct of what? Let's find out! Is there more to happiness? The answer is...Absolutely!

I. Happiness is the result of embracing God's priorities

Mark 12:30-31 “And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.” (NLT)

- We fool ourselves in thinking that we can experience happiness in this life by ignoring God's greatest life priorities. These priorities are not here to ruin our lives. They give us life! God made this world and He set it up to operate a certain way.

A. Intimacy with God results in happiness

Ps. 16:11” You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” (NASB)

1. Why would we want to ignore the One who can give us fullness of joy? Often it is our wrong concept of God that makes us avoid Him. We don't look at Him as a joy producer / contentment provider / the source of our happiness.
2. Many people view God as serious / judgmental / quick to punish / guilt provider and the fun inhibitor / Happiness and God are not put in the same sentence.
3. There has been much in the media about the getting your flu shots and the vaccine for the swine flu. WHY? So you can be protected from these strains of influenza.
4. What if there was a vaccine you could take that would protect you from experiencing a life of unhappiness? What would that be worth to you? Priceless!
5. The good news is there is one! Your relationship with God will be the greatest and most consistent protection from unhappiness you will ever experience! I'm not talking about religion. I am talking about intimacy with God...experiencing God.
6. The past 2 ½ months have been some of the most challenging that I have faced. The launching of Fall / the starting of a expansion project / moving our offices / 6 funerals / the loss of a dear friend / the increasing demands of ministry / the strain was starting to show. 2 Fridays ago was the first day off I had in about 35 days.

- Share about going up above Molalla. (explain)
- 7. Some of you are stressed / tired / worn out / joyless / circumstances are overwhelming you; and yet you are avoiding the only ONE who can pour life and joy back into you. Learning to love God and experience Him does not take life. Loving God is LIFE!
- BUT, this is only half of it. There's a second part.

B. Intimacy with each other results in happiness

1. How can we be filled with happiness if our relationships are in turmoil? Therefore, just as we need to give our relationship with God priority, we must give our relationships with each other priority.
2. One of the reasons for the amount of unhappiness in this world is the fact that we treat people as disposable. Relationships are disposable. It's no wonder we're miserable when all we have to show are a trail of broken relationships.
3. We give all our time and energy to the wrong priorities. We give it all to work / careers / making money / acquiring possessions / personal achievements / meaningless activities / and we have no time for relationships...the things that really make us happy.
4. My oldest daughter was in a head on car accident a week ago Friday (Don't worry...she's fine!) Later that night I was walking through the house looking at all our pictures (memories of vacations / experiences together / happy moments captured in time) I didn't regret any one! Praised God for no regrets!
5. The most precious and life altering things we have in this life are the relationships we have. You are not guaranteed you can work on them tomorrow / next week / next year when you're not so busy. We have been given today!
 - Don't wait to fix your marriage / reconnect with that friend / forgive someone / spend more time with your kids.
6. It is worth all the effort it takes to make your relationships great! WHY? Because they are the greatest source of joy we will ever experience in this life.
- Everything else I am going to say today is important, BUT none are as important as these. You can be experiencing intimacy with God and great relationships with others and everything else in your life can be terrible, and you'll be OK. You can have everything in your life like OK and no relationship with God and poor relationships with others and you will have NO joy!

II. Happiness is the result of following God's word

Ps. 1:1-3 "Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do." (NLT)

A. Following God's word protects us from wrong paths

1. When we follow God's word we don't get lost. It's no fun being lost. There's no happiness in not knowing what direction to go. Notice this passage says, "Oh the joys" of those who don't take the wrong path.
2. This is why knowing the word of God is so important. If you don't know the word of God you have no life map you're following. If you follow the word of God, you have confidence because you know the path.
3. Have you seen the movie "Pirates of the Caribbean"? In the movie Jack Sparrow has a compass that doesn't work. (Doesn't point north) In the next movie we discover what it really points to. It points to what your heart desires most.
4. God's word is like this! It will always take you in the direction that will satisfy your heart the most. God made your heart. He knows what will satisfy it the most. God's word is a map to have those desires satisfied!

B. Following God's word results in blessing

1. This passage promises something. There is blessing for following God's word. This is something that is repeated throughout the Bible. Obedience = Blessing / happiness. Disobedience = consequences and unhappiness. There is great joy in living a blessed life!
2. When I see the promises of God's word played out in the reality of my life there is happiness. When you start taking God's word and applying it to your life and you see that it works...it's pretty fun!
3. When you start experiencing that prayer works / that generosity produces blessing / that God's power is real / His promises are to be claimed / that all He says is true / life is no longer so dark and confusing. It can be filled with a lot of happiness.!
4. If you truly desire happiness, you need to look at your commitment to His word.

III. Happiness is the result of accepting God's perspective of trials

Rom. 5:3-5 "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love." (NLT)

A. Trails are part of the journey

1. We simply cannot have the perspective that this life will be free from challenges And hardships. If you think you should get a "Get out of Life" Free Card, sorry to break the news to you. You don't get one.
2. Trials do NOT indicate God does not love you. They indicate that you are still on planet earth in a fallen sinful environment and heaven is still in your future...not now.
3. Trails happen to all of us! No one gets a free ride. During the past 2 months in the midst of all the insanity, I just wanted to go home for lunch for a bit. I just needed to get away from it all for a few moments. (Explain what happened with the pump

blowing up)

- WHY? Why does this happen? (Fallen world / spiritual enemy / we make bad choices / other people make choices that effect us.

B. Trials are God's opportunities for us to grow

1. Now, I'll be completely honest, when I saw my pump house exploded and water gushing everywhere, the first thought in my mind was not; "Thank you Lord for this wonderful opportunity to grow!"
2. At the end of the day though, after we had water restored, in my exhaustion, I was in the shop with my wife and I said; "I refuse to give the enemy the satisfaction of him winning." I refuse to lose it / refuse to complain / refuse to
3. Joy is the final result of maturity. Happiness is the result of growth. If we refuse to grow through the trials of life we will always be unhappy. The trials are not fun, but the maturity they bring results in fun.
4. Some of the greatest life skills I have / perspective I have / wisdom God has given me have come through painful experiences. Now that I possess these things, they bless my life! That's happiness!
5. Immaturity is a curse! It's not a happy place...it's a confusing place. Allowing God to grow you / mature you / give you His life wisdom will result in great joy. There is blessing on the backside of trials!

IV. Happiness is the result of embracing Godly balance

Ps. 127:2 It's useless to rise early and go to bed late, and work your worried fingers to the bone. Don't you know he enjoys giving rest to those he loves? (Message)

Ecc. 2:22-23 "So what do people get in this life for all their hard work and anxiety? Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night their minds cannot rest. It is all meaningless." (NLT)

A. Life out of balance leads to unhappiness

1. If there is an epidemic cause for being unhappy it is this. Life is so out of balance there is no time for happiness. We live haggard / out of control lives and then wonder why we're so unhappy.
2. Life balance is a lot like when they balance your tires on your vehicle. They balance them for a reason. If they are not balanced properly, they don't wear right. They wear out faster. (SLIDE)
3. Many for you are living life out of balance. You may be wearing thin / your marriage / your relationships / with your kids / you look like this tire...maybe feel.
4. There's no happiness living life like this no matter how spiritual you are. This is something God has been impressing upon me in light of the past several months.

B. Practicing God's principals of rest results in joy

1. It is time for us to embrace the truth that "He enjoys giving rest to those He loves." Rest is a blessing from God. Rest is a command from God. Rest results in

- happiness.
2. Let's slow down long enough to actually think through the way many of us are living. Why do you want to look like this tire? Why do you want to live in a way that will destroy you and others around you? (hinder you from living God's priorities)
 3. Living this way is not just unhealthy it is destructive. We need to get out of denial in thinking we can just continue this way without consequences. Nothing is worth sacrificing God / marriage / your kids / There is no career / possession / promotion / worth sentencing yourself to a life of unhappiness.
 4. Do you want to be truly happy? Some of you need to make some major life changes. For some of you this is your loving warning from God. He is telling you to stop. WHY? Because you are missing the life he wants to give you!

V. Happiness is the result of choosing to be thankful

1 Thess 5:18-19 "Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. Do not stifle the Holy Spirit"

A. An ungrateful heart stifles the Holy Spirit in our lives

1. I believe these two verses are connected for a reason. Being thankful is God's will for every believer. It is the Holy Spirit in our lives that produces love / joy / peace / etc... Therefore, when we act in a way that is contrary to God's will, we are shutting down the Holy Spirit's work in our lives and therefore, be unhappy!
2. Choosing to be thankful in all circumstances, unleashes the Holy Spirit in our lives to produce the joy we long for.
3. Everyone has the choice to either gripe or be grateful. One produces unhappiness the other produces joy. One shuts down the Holy Spirit, the other ignites Him.
4. You see, when we gripe and complain, we are stewing on the things we don't like running them over and over again in our mind like a movie that continually plays. The more it plays the more unhappy you become. We literally choose to be unhappy.

B. Choosing to be thankful is the path to happiness

1. Happiness is wanting what you have not having what you want. If you are the type of person who has to have what you want all the time in order to be happy, my guess is you're not happy much.
2. Sometimes we can get so focused on what is wrong in this world and all around us that we are completely blinded to what is right / good / wholesome / positive. We have a choice on what we dwell on.

Phil. 4:8-9 "And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you." (NLT)

3. There is no happiness without peace of mind. What we choose to fix our thoughts on determines whether we will experience peace or anxiety...whether we'll be happy or unhappy.
 4. What path has your thinking been on lately? If it's stuck on what's wrong with your life your feelings will follow. If you choose to fix your thoughts on what is true and right...your feelings will follow.
- As we cry out to God and say..."I just want to be happy!" God would say, "I want you to be happy too! Here's how!" Embrace My priorities / Follow My word / Grow in the trials / Embrace balance / Choose to be thankful / and happiness will not be so elusive...it will be your reality!