

Happiness...and How to Get It

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

We cannot manufacture happiness, but we **can choose** to live a life of joy.... We **can choose** to cultivate a grateful heart. We **can choose** not to allow ourselves to be a grouch.

Most of us believe that happiness is an elusive dream – an emotion we will feel when everything in our lives falls into place...When we finally achieve success...when we win the Publishers' Clearing House Sweepstakes...when our spouse and family become as perfect as we want them to be. When... when...when...it's out there somewhere – happiness – and maybe one of these days....

Some of us got married believing *that* man or *that* woman would always **make us happy**. That is what they are supposed to do – right? After all, they promised to love, honor and cherish us, so they had better get with it!

If you believe these things, you are believing a bunch of lies! Real happiness – the deep joy that makes your heart sing – doesn't depend on circumstances. That's happenstance, not happiness. The circumstances around us, what other people do or don't do affect us, sometimes deeply. But if we are counting on them to somehow make us happy, we're going to wait a very long time. And while we are waiting for happiness to find us, we will probably simply live passively in neutral and endure.

That's no way to live! You cannot call that "abundant

life." You cannot endorse the joy of the Lord with authenticity **if you are living in neutral**. And yet, way too many Christians live like this – the un-abundant life – just making do.

Have you ever wanted to stop believing those "happiness someday someday" lies? Have you even thought it was **possible** to stop believing those lies? Can the Truth really set you free from those lies? The answer is a resounding YES! And choosing to believe God's truth about happiness can change your life!

It worked for the Psalmist. When David wrote Psalm 30, he wasn't simply writing nice lyrics to fit a tune. These words are TRUTH and they are powerful: *You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give you thanks forever.* (vv. 11-12)

To unpack what David is saying: "Life was so hard, I was crying, not just whimpering, mind you, I was wailing. I was covered with grief. It was all I could think about. But the Lord lifted my sadness off me, and dressed me with joy instead – so much joy that I can't help but sing to Him. My grief kept me silent, but now my heart sings with joy. My heart is so full of gratitude that I can never stop thanking God. I am so grateful He is my God!"

Here's the truth – **if** we let Him...

1. God can turn our crying into dancing.

2. God can take away our sadness and cover us with His joy.
3. God can make our hearts sing.
4. God can give us grateful hearts.

Having grateful hearts is intricately wrapped up in our happiness, and our happiness is completely wrapped up in how thankful we are. When we cultivate thankful hearts, we begin to see all the reasons we have to be glad...which sparks feelings of happiness...which makes us grateful...which makes us thank God more. It is an upward spiral. **As we cultivate a thankful heart, we are actually cultivating happiness.**

**Cultivating
Thankfulness →
Cultivating
Happiness**

Did you know we are **commanded** to cultivate a grateful heart? Not only is it a good idea, as well as a very healthy one, but God actually commands it of us in Scripture, because He wants His kids to be *truly* happy. Take for instance, Colossians 3:15-17 – *And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And **always be thankful**. Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God **with thankful hearts**. And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus,*

Happiness (cont')

all the while giving thanks

through him to God the Father.

(NLT) Here are three consecutive verses commanding us to be thankful. In verse 15, it couldn't be more clear – "Be thankful." In verse 16, we are commanded to sing with thankful hearts. And in verse 17, we are commanded to do everything in the name of Jesus while giving thanks to the Father through Him. Get the message?

These verses show us something that we must understand: **being thankful is a choice, not a feeling.** We are not told to FEEL thankful. We are commanded to BE thankful (whether we *feel* like it or not). **We must choose to be thankful...to be grateful...intentionally...on purpose.**

Orval Butcher *lived* Colossians 3:15-17. We first met Rev. Butcher in the 90's. We walked with him and his dear wife Gwen as she went through cancer treatment. That's what first connected our hearts – we had recently traveled that valley ourselves. We watched Orval carry on with such grace and peace when Gwen went home to Jesus. And when we faced the biggest spiritual battle of our lives, Orval stood beside us, believed in us, and encouraged us. Through

the years since then, Orval regularly sent us notes and emails of encouragement. That is who he was. He encouraged every life he touched – and he touched many – with the overflow of joy in his own heart. And now that he is with the Lord, we know his joy has been made complete.

Orval Butcher did not have a grateful, joyful heart by accident. He cultivated a life of thankfulness the entire time we knew him, and for many years before that. And we are so glad he did... because his joy spilled out all over us! We want to live like that. Don't you?

Savoring the good things gives a different perspective of your day.

If you do, here is a *simple action* you can practice every day that will help you take a *giant step* toward cultivating a grateful heart. Every evening when you crawl into bed, think about three things during that day which were blessings to you. Talk about them with your spouse, asking what three blessings he/she experienced as well. Write these blessings in a book or on a notepad, keeping a journal of all the blessings

mentioned. This simple act of *savoring* the good things that happen around and to you will give you a different perspective of your day. It will eventually help you look for the good things you can savor the next day...and the next.

Why does this work? Because gratitude changes your attitude! Catherine Hart Weber, counselor and life coach, declares that "The practice of gratitude has amazing daily benefits, improving overall health and wellbeing in every aspect of life. Gratitude elevates, energizes and transforms. Considered the strongest predictor of life satisfaction, gratitude keeps us close to God, improves relationships and increases happiness levels. Martin Luther referred to gratitude as 'The basic Christian attitude'...."

And no wonder! For it is this "basic Christian attitude" that cultivates real, authentic happiness in our hearts. Not the kind of happiness that comes and goes with stuff, or even with how well our spouse or kids treat us. But the deep and settled joy of believing the God of the universe loves us so much, that He will make our hearts sing if we, like David, will "give Him thanks forever."

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