

"Happiness is an Inside Job"

By Allan Pole



Theme: God is the source of true joy.

Text: Nehemiah 8:10

Here's a thought: He who laughs, lasts.

www.powerofpositivity.com/7-common-places-unhappy-people-look-happiness lists 7 places people look for happiness (that they shouldn't):

1. Your next vacation
2. Material possessions
3. In other people
4. In your bank account
5. The perfect life situation
6. Recognition from others
7. Being famous

This begs the question, "Where *do* you find happiness?"

Not in unbelief - Voltaire was an atheist of the most pronounced type. He lamented, "I wish I had never been born."

Not in pleasure - Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure, if anyone did. He revealed, "The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone."

Not in money - Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When he was dying he complained: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Not in position and fame - Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He concluded, "Youth is a mistake; manhood, a struggle; old age, a regret."

Not in military glory - Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept, because, he said, "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Where, then, is happiness found? The answer to this question was written in 445 B.C. when the Jews returned from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem in Nehemiah 8:8-10:

8 They [the Levites] read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. 9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. 10 Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." NIV

Joy has its own:

Nature



Joy can't help being expressed. It takes just 15 facial muscles to smile and as many as 65 facial muscles to frown. Stop overworking yourself!

He who laughs, lasts.

Today, laughter has become a marketable commodity because of its healthful benefits. King Solomon knew this a long time ago when he noted in Proverbs 17:22, "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." NIV

Humour is in big demand - comedies are among the most profitable films in North America, stand-up comedy abounds and surveys have shown that most people read the comics before any other part of the newspaper.

True joy does not depend upon circumstances. Two men had no human reason to be joyful in Acts 16:22-25:

22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 About

midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. NIV

An Englishman, a Frenchman and a Russian were discussing happiness. "Happiness," declared the Englishman, "Is when you return home tired after work and find your slippers warming by the fire."

"You English have no romance," retorted the Frenchman. "Happiness is having dinner with a beautiful woman at a fine restaurant."

"You are both wrong," corrected the Russian. "True happiness is when you are at home in bed and at 4 a.m. hear a hammering at your door and there stand the secret police, who shout to you, 'Ivan Ivanovitch, you are under arrest,' and you shout back, 'Sorry, Ivan Ivanovitch lives next door!'"

Helen Keller, unable to see or hear, observed:

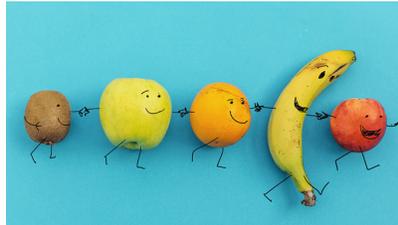
When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.

What characterizes your life? Would those around you describe you as joyful?

Joy has its own:

Nature

Source



According to the Jewish Encyclopedia no language has as many words for joy and rejoicing as does Hebrew. In the Hebrew Scriptures (what we call the Old Testament) 13 Hebrew roots, found in 27 different words, are used primarily for some aspect of joy or joyful participation in worship. Hebrew tradition demonstrates God as the source of joy. In contrast to the rituals of other faiths of the East, Israelite worship was a joyous proclamation and celebration. The good Israelite regarded the act of thanking God as the supreme joy of his life.

Such joy is *of the Lord*. It is a gift from God. In Galatians 5:22 the Bible reveals that joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit in His people.

Psalm 16:11 explains that joy comes from being in God's presence:

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. NIV

C.S. Lewis writes in his book, "Mere Christianity":

God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.

Joy determines spiritual strength. Avoid focusing only on the negative; that makes you vulnerable to Satan's discouragement. Concentrate instead on the positive things God has said and done.

Pray for joy. You may often ask God for guidance and healing, but when was the last time you asked for His joy?

Decide to enjoy life. It may be an up-and-down ride, but there's no doubt that following Jesus never lacks excitement.

Walk with God and tap into His joy by:

- Inviting Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Saviour.
- Obeying God.
- Thinking about His presence. Study the Bible, pray, give thanks and worship.

What are *you* relying upon for joy and happiness? More money? A spouse? A new job? Friends? God is the source of true joy.

Joy has its own:

Nature

Source

Power



Joy has immense power. It enables you to lift your head regardless of your circumstances.

Dramatic events occurred after Paul and Silas rose above adversity and expressed their joy in Acts 16:26-33:

26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. NIV

Look beyond what is facing you. When you focus on negative events you are living by sight, not faith - the opposite of God's intention. God is always in control, and He always answers your prayers - in His way and His time, not yours.

Even after Constantine had made Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire in 313 A.D., there came to the throne 48 years later another emperor called Julian, who wanted to turn the clock back and to restore the old gods. His complaint was:

Have you looked at these Christians closely? Hollow-eyed, pale-cheeked, flat-breasted all; they brood their lives away, unspurred by ambition: the sun shines for them, but they do not see it: the earth offers them its fullness, but they desire it not; all their desire is to renounce and to suffer that they may come to die.

As Julian saw it, Christianity took the vitality out of life. Oliver Wendell Holmes once remarked, "I might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen I knew had not looked and acted so much like undertakers." Robert Louis Stevenson once entered in his diary, as if he were recording an extraordinary phenomenon, "I have been to Church today, and am not depressed."

John Maxwell advised, "Until you make peace with *who* you are, you'll never be content with *where* you are."

Axel Murthe observed, "A man can stand a lot as long as he can stand himself."

Let the joy of the Lord become happy laughter. When you laugh, your diaphragm goes down, your lungs expand, and you take in two or three times more oxygen than usual. As a result, a surge of energy runs through your body. Happy individuals recover from disease much more quickly than sad,

complaining patients; and statistics show that those who laugh live longer.

The foundation for happiness is a proper relationship with the Lord. Building upon this foundation, I submit this list of "Ten Rules for Happier Living":

1. Give something away (with no strings attached).
2. Do a kindness (and forget it).
3. Spend time with the aged (experience is priceless).
4. Look intently into the face of a baby (and marvel).
5. Laugh often (it is life's lubricant).
6. Give thanks (a thousand times a day is not enough).
7. Pray (or you will lose the way).
8. Work (with vim and vigour).
9. Plan as though you will live forever (you will).
10. Live as though you will die tomorrow (because you *will* die on some tomorrow).

A young girl received Christ in exciting revival meetings with her church and was baptized the closing Sunday morning. That afternoon she ran through the house singing and dancing. Her sour grandfather rebuked her with these words, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself! Just joined the church and singing and dancing on the Lord's Day!"

Crushed by her grandfather's attitude, the little girl went out to the barn, climbed up on the corral fence, and observed an old mule standing there with a sad, droopy face and bleary eyes. As she reached over and patted the mule sympathetically, she consoled him with, "Don't cry, ole mule. I guess you've just got the same kind of religion that grandpa has!"

Joy has its own:

Nature

Source

Power

Is your joy ruled by circumstances? Does your happiness and contentment depend upon your environment?

God is the source of true joy.

