

Finding True Happiness



We all want to be happy. It's hardwired into each one of us. We look for ways to gain a sense of "well-being": satisfying relationships, clear life-purpose, knowing we are loved and accepted. Did you know that God wants each of us to be happy? He does! And God has given us direction in how to be happy in the life and teachings of Jesus.

We will be looking at Jesus' most famous teaching, "The Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew chps. 5-7). I invite you to read through those chapters, listening carefully for God's particular guidance for your own happiness. But I must warn you that Jesus' ideas about finding happiness will be different from your own. They will stretch you, challenge you, and take you into some unfamiliar territory. However, if you act on these teachings, you will begin to grow into a happiness that can never be shaken or taken away.

I'm going to summarize **four key actions** for making your life the happiest it can be, all from "The Sermon on the Mount". Consider what God may be saying to you for your next step in your journey with Him into happiness.

- 1. GIVE YOURSELF AWAY.** Jesus was generous with people. He gladly gave away his time and attention and love. His teaching on happiness begins with "Happy are the poor. For theirs is the Kingdom of God". This is a poverty that comes from pouring yourself out for others. It is an "emptiness" that waits for God to fill it. And then when God fills it, you find ways to "leak" out all that good stuff for the benefit of those around you, regardless of whether you think they "deserve" it or not. This takes courage and focus. And we don't learn it in a day. It takes practice. Look for opportunities to help people with the resources God has given you and you will find happiness.
- 2. GO TO YOUR "INNER ROOM".** This is a place of quiet where you intentionally meet with the love and truth of Jesus. It is also a place of great reward. Your "inner room" helps you to see clearly your own limits and failures, but in light and perfect love of Jesus. This place also allows you to gain valuable wisdom for your day-to-day activities. It's primarily a place of careful LISTENING to the whisper of God in your heart. But it can be a conversation too where you share with your Faithful

Companion are your hurts and pains and sadness. Jesus invites you to carve out some time each day to meet with God in your "inner room".

- 3. RECEIVE LIFE AS A GIFT.** Most of us strive to make a life on our own. We anxiously try desperately to gain happiness by our own efforts: get more money, get a better spouse, get a better job, find a better drug. All this work often leaves us simply feeling empty and lonely. Jesus suggests a different way: Cultivate an attitude of learning to receive life as a gift from a Loving Giver. Even in the midst of troubling circumstances, Jesus said your Heavenly Father never stops loving you and providing for you. We often miss it because we're so focused on the negative. Learn to shift your focus to what God is giving you to meet life's demands. Then learn to say, "Thank you". Gratitude paves a way for happiness!
- 4. GRANT FORGIVENESS.** This is a tough one because our natural tendency is to "get even". But all that kind of thinking gets us is a life burdened down with anger and resentment. Jesus' forgiveness does not sweep a person's wrong under the rug but invites us to release our desire to get "justice" into God's hands, trusting Him to make things right. It's about LETTING GO of our need to be Judge and Jury and replacing that with actions that bless (rather than berate) the offending individual.

So it's simple, right? Just do these four things and you'll be outrageously happy! OK, these words are for those who dare to courageously build a whole new way of living. Jesus' way to happiness is for individuals who are done with "business as usual". Are you that person?

Let us know if we can help.



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