

Happiness

Eccl 2³ “I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. ⁴ I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. ⁵ I made myself gardens and orchards, and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. ⁶ I made myself water pools ... ⁷ I acquired male and female servants ... I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. ⁸ I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. ⁹ So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

¹⁰ Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor. ¹¹ Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun ...

²⁴ Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. ²⁵ For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? ²⁶ For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God ... ¹² ¹ Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come ... ¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.

► One of the biggest deceptions of life, even for Christians, is found in the failure to understand what happiness actually _____, where it _____, and how to _____ it.

Five things the Bible teaches us about happiness:

► 1) Happiness is the _____ of God.

James 1¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights

Dt 8⁷ [T]he LORD your God is bringing you into a good land ..., ⁹ a land in which ... you will lack nothing ... ¹⁰ When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. ¹¹ Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God ... ¹² lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; ¹³ and ... all that you have is multiplied; ¹⁴ ... [that] you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; ¹⁵ who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, ... who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; ¹⁶ who fed you in the wilderness with manna, ... that He might test you, to do you good in the end—¹⁷ then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’ ¹⁸ And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His

covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. ¹⁹ Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.

► 2) Happiness is rejecting the world’s _____ that I can obtain happiness for myself. The message of the world is that happiness is something you can obtain for yourself by obtaining a certain

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____ or _____
- or a _____ thereof

Life becomes a _____ as you compete with others in person or on social media. This does not produce happiness, it produces _____-focus, _____, and _____.

Solomon is the one man in history who had it _____, yet it left him _____ and _____. He concluded that happiness is “from the hand of _____.” You will come to agree with Solomon, the question is _____. “Remember your Creator in the days of your _____.”

► 3) Happiness is realizing that _____ knows more and cares more about my happiness than I do. This was the lesson that _____ learned in the Garden of Eden.

Gn 3⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

– What good gifts did God surround Adam & Eve with as proof of his love and glorious intentions for them?

James 1 ² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials [tests], ³ knowing that the testing [proof of genuineness] of your faith produces patience [steadfastness]. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect [may reach the goal] and complete, lacking nothing.

– What key to walking with God and ruling in his name did Jesus demonstrate during his temptation by the devil?

Mat 4 ¹ Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. ³ Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” ⁴ But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

Consider the kind of character in a book or movie that you are drawn to, that you admire, that you identify with and want to be like. Do they have an easy life, free of challenges, full of easy pleasures? God is not leaving us to ourselves, so that we sink down in our ease and become characters no one would _____ or find interesting. He is turning us into characters that people would _____ and be inspired by. That’s why God demands that we trust and walk with him in the midst of difficulty and hardship. He is lifting us up. He is making us _____. He is making us like _____.

– Thru creation & redemption God has proven for all time that he knows & cares more about our happiness than _____ do. That’s the foundation for the central lesson of life:

Pr 3 ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. ⁸ It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones

► 5) Happiness is blessing _____ as God has blessed you.

Gn 12 ¹ “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing [lit., “you be a blessing”]. ³ ... And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

► 4) Happiness is not always pleasantness, but includes walking with God thru _____ and hardships, so that we might become all that it means to be sons and daughters of _____.

Job 5 ¹⁷ Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening [training] of the Almighty. ¹⁸ For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole.

This won’t work as long as we are _____ with others for looks, smarts, popularity, wealth, and status so we can be “happy.” This only works when we know God, and we understand what happiness _____, where it comes from, and how to biblically pursue it.

The word for “happy” (*esher*) is often translated “blessed.” It comes from a word (*ashar*) that literally means “to advance,” i.e., toward a _____. We are advancing toward the goal for which God created & redeemed us, and we are therefore blessed and happy, whether or not we are presently having _____.