

# TRUE HAPPINESS

A composite image featuring an open book at the bottom. The pages of the book are spread wide, revealing a landscape scene. In the center, a man with a backpack walks away from the viewer on a dirt path that leads towards a wooden cross in a vast green field. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds, and a bright sun is visible behind the cross, creating a lens flare effect. The overall mood is one of spiritual journey and hope.

**A PUBLICATION BY JOSHUA GOODLING**

# TRUE HAPPINESS

“Hello there. How are you today?”, asked one Christian to another.

“Oh, I’m okay I guess.” was the reply.

“Only okay? Why is that?”

“Well, my dog was sick today, my car had trouble this morning, and I couldn’t decide what to wear!”

This short conversation is not rare in many Christian’s lives, even though Christians are supposed to be happy no matter what happens. After all, Jesus promised us happiness even during life’s roughest of storms. And, if that is true, why do so many of us go around all day like we’ve lost our best friend?

Webster’s Dictionary defines happiness as “enjoying life, contented, causing joy”. The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 3:1, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice”. In Psalm 144:15, the Bible tells us, “...happy is that people, whose God is the Lord”. There are many verses in the Word of God that instruct Christians to be happy, to rejoice, and to be content.

However, there are thousands and even millions of Christians who live their lives in total misery and unhappiness. There are many Christians who walk around all day with their chins plowing furrows in the ground in front of them. If you need your garden plowed, you just need to have one of these Christians come walk around in it for a while! The main problem I see is that too many people are looking for happiness in all the wrong places.

Many people think true happiness is found in pleasure. Sure, pleasures may bring a temporary kind of happiness for a time, but that will soon be gone. There are many wealthy people who seemingly enjoy all the pleasures this life has to offer, yet they are truly not happy.

True happiness is not found in money or great prosperity either. People often think that if they just had a little more money, they would be happy. Jay Gould was a millionaire, yet on his deathbed he is reported as saying "I suppose I am the most miserable man in this entire world." Money sure did not bring him much happiness.

Howard Hughes was one of the richest men ever, yet he spent the

last years of his life in solitude and misery.

True happiness is also not found in fame. Lord Beaconsfield, a well-known literary figure in his day, wrote, “Youth is a mistake, manhood a struggle, and old age a regret.” It doesn’t sound as if he was too happy, does it?

Many of the so-called “worldly rich and famous” are really miserable on the inside. They have all the fame and fortune one could want, yet they are not truly happy. All the keys that this world has to offer cannot unlock the door to true happiness. The only TRUE HAPPINESS in this life is found in Jesus Christ!

But, wait a minute! If that is true, then why are so many Christians unhappy? Why do so many Christians who possess the “key” to true happiness not seem to be able to obtain it? It is because they too look for it in all the wrong places. They attempt to find happiness where only misery can be found. Only when our lives belong TOTALLY to God can we ever find true happiness. Psalm 128:1-2 tells us, “Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord and walketh in his ways, for thou shalt eat the labor of thy hands: HAPPY shalt thou

be, and it shall be well with thee.”

Before we look into discovering true happiness, let us take a moment to fully understand just what is true happiness? In Matthew 5:3-12, Jesus describes the Christian’s life. He mentions multiple times, “Blessed are...”. The word “blessed” means “joyful, blissful, and holy”. In other words, Jesus was teaching, “Blessed (joyful, blissful, and holy) are those who serve Me and follow my teachings!” Joyful and blissful sounds pretty happy to me! Notice that throughout the passage mentioned, Jesus said blessed are those who are pure in heart and those who seek avidly after Me, etc. Jesus was saying, “If you live for Me and if you faithfully serve Me, you will find true happiness. We will find that the true happiness a Christian should have is all the happiness a Christian can have!

People are daily searching this world for happiness, for something to please them, but what the world offers them, never satisfies, or seems to produce the happiness they are looking for. They are constantly looking and hunting for something new and fulfilling, and they never find it. However, when we enjoy the true happiness

found only in Jesus, we will never have to look elsewhere!

“How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” (Psalm 36:7-8) The word abundant here is described as, “a great amount, more than enough”. That definitely describes the joy and happiness we as a Christian can now enjoy. When we find this “True Happiness”, it will be overflowing; it will be all we can hold.

This happiness is not the ordinary happiness like the world offers. True happiness is found in God and in God alone. “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord.” (Psalm 146:5) The reason this world tries everything from sex, drugs, entertainment, and who knows what else, is because they are looking for THINGS to give them happiness. The reason many people go from one religion to another, join false cults, and worship other gods is because they are looking for happiness where it can't be found. **THE ONLY LASTING AND TRUE HAPPINESS IS FOUND IN GOD AND HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST!** He is the author and creator of

true happiness. God can do without us, but if we want true happiness, we cannot have it without Him!

Peter describes the happiness found in Jesus Christ as “unspeakable”. 1 Peter 1:8 says, “Whom having not seen, ye love; though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Peter says that the joy of the Lord is unspeakable, unexplainable, and indescribable; it is so great and wonderful that it cannot be explained. Yes, this is TRUE HAPPINESS! This is the happiness that each of us as Christians can enjoy, and should be experiencing each and every day of our lives. All that this world has to offer cannot even compare to what Jesus Christ has so graciously promised to us.

So, with this true happiness available for the getting, how come so many Christians live their entire lives without ever experiencing it? It is mainly because they never live the Christian life as God has commanded us to live it. Life without this true happiness is unnecessary for the Christian, so why live it? It is like having a check for \$10,000,000 and yet never cashing it! It is like having a mansion available to live in, and yet living in a cardboard box on the street.

This happiness, true happiness, IS AVAILABLE, but we must decide ourselves to seek it and find it. God does not force it upon us, He leave the choice up to each of us to decide whether we want to do what it takes to experience this happiness.

After seeing the description of the true happiness available in Jesus Christ, I am eager to find out what causes it. Where is it? How do I find it? Well, let's take a close look...Where does this true happiness come from? We find firstly that true happiness come from fearing the Lord. The word "fear" in this respect means to have a reverential regard for.

Angels cover their faces with respect and reverence as they approach God, yet we often treat Him as just a person, or even in a worse manner. We spend too much time demanding things from God instead of bowing before Him in worship and praise for Who He is and what He has done. In order to be truly happy, we must fear and respect our God so much that we entrust our entire lives to His control.

When we become Christians, we give our live to God. Our life no



longer belongs to us, it is His to do with as He pleases. We have been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. One of the most certain ways to prevent ourselves from finding and experiencing true happiness is to take back control of our own lives.

If a total stranger came into your house one day, kicked you out, and began using your house to hold his wild parties for all his friends, you would call the police and have him arrested. Yet we think nothing about doing the same thing to God. We act the way WE want. We do whatever WE please. We frequent the places We choose. And, we make life changing decisions and choices about a life that no longer belongs to us! Reverence to God and therefore true happiness begin when self interest cease, and they end when self interest takes over again. Henry Van Dyke said, "Self is the only prison that can bind the soul." So often, we are the ones preventing ourselves from knowing happiness.

A Christian can only be happy when they become a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, and a hand through which Christ helps.

Notice in the above statement, the words "...through which Christ...". Our life is to be an outpouring of Jesus Christ. We are to be beacons through which Christ shines His love to this darkening world. To fear God means to worship Him, honor Him, and praise Him with every area of our lives.

The story is told that back in the 1800's, a visiting minister was substituting for the famous preacher, Henry Ward Beecher. One Sunday, a large and eager audience had gathered at his church, to hear the popular preacher speak. When word got around that a visiting speaker was there, and Pastor Beecher would not be the one speaking, some of the vast crowd began to leave. The visiting speaker stood up in the pulpit and called out, "All of you who have come to worship Henry Beecher go ahead and leave. All who have come to worship God, please keep your seats!"

Too many times we put more importance upon man and his abilities than we place on the Supreme God that we supposedly trust and serve. When we live like that, it's no wonder we're not happy! John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth." When with our hearts we truly respect,

fear, and worship God, only then can we enjoy true happiness in our lives. One of the main problems in today's world is that many Christians worship and fear many other things instead of God. To fear God and to fear nothing else in God's universe is to be a truly happy person.

The second step to being a happy Christian, is to obey God completely in all areas of our lives. The latter part of Psalm 128:2 says "Blessed is everyone...that walketh in His ways." Jesus said in John 13:15,17, "For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you...If you know these things happy are ye if ye do them."

To many Christians it seems the Bible is just another book. It is no wonder they are not happy, they do not really know God, and certainly don't keep and obey His commandments. When we choose to obey God, we will find happiness.

Would a fish be happy living in a dry and dusty desert? No, because a fish belongs and can only live in the water. Would a bird be happy living underground? No, because a bird is only happy when it can

spread its wings and soar in the air. And can a Christian be happy without obeying God? No, No, No, and a THOUSAND times NO! A Christian cannot be happy living for himself or for this world because a true Christian is made to live for and serve the God Who created us!

II Corinthians 5:17 says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; and behold ALL things are become new.” The Bible says that ALL things are become new in our lives once we become a Christian. We are to be completely and entirely changed. Every desire, every want, every plan, and every goal in our lives is now different than before. We are to make a complete about-face and start heading the opposite direction. So, the things that supposedly brought us temporary happiness before, cannot make us happy now! The only way we can truly be happy is to do our duty as Christians, and that is to obey our Supreme Commander – Almighty God! True happiness is created in the heart and must have God for its foundation.

During a war, many thousands of soldiers die doing what they have been commanded by their superiors. For these soldiers it is never

a question of “should I?” or “can i?”, it is “I received a command to do this, and I must obey my commander!” We as Christians many times cannot seem to grasp this concept of unquestioned obedience to our commander – “Almighty God”! In God’s Word are commands to obey Him, to serve Him, and to do His will in every area of our lives. Until we realize the awesome importance of this, we will NEVER be TRULY happy.

Now, someone may ask, “If I don’t serve God and obey Him in my life, does that mean I cannot be happy?” Yes, that is exactly what it means. Oh, we may have moments of excitement and laughter, and we may experience brief times of the happiness this world offers, but we will not have the peace and happiness daily in our hearts that ONLY God can provide.

A Hindu worshiper once asked a native Christian of India, “What medicine do you put on your face to make it shine so brightly?” “I don’t put anything on it,” replied the Christian. “Yes, you do! Most of you Christians do. I’ve seen shining faces on a lot of Christians.” The Christian replied, “I will tell you what ‘medicine’ makes our

faces shine – it is the joy in our hearts from serving Jesus Christ!”

Helen Keller once said, “Many people have the wrong idea about what constitutes true happiness. It is not obtained through self-gratification, but through devotion to a worthy cause!” And, what more worthy cause is there than to love and serve our most wonderful Lord? It is a lot easier to obey God, no matter how difficult it may seem, than to face the consequences of not obeying Him.

Finally, there is a third step to finding TRUE happiness. Proverbs 16:20 tells us, “...Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.” Psalm 34:8 says, “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed [how happy] is the man that trusteth in Him.” If we REALLY want peace and true happiness in our lives, we MUST trust God completely. Now, trusting God and obeying God are not the same thing. We can obey Him without fully trusting Him, and we can trust Him without fully obeying Him...At least for a while.

God promises that there are going to be times of testing, times of trouble, times of persecution, and times when we have problems. The secret to being happy during these difficult times is learning to

trust God completely and realizing that He is in control. This is one of the most difficult things for us to learn as Christians. It seems many of us enjoy worrying over our problems. If you worry, you do not trust, but if you TRULY trust, there is no need for worry. However, the way many of us live, one would get the idea that we enjoy stress and that we love having problems, after all – we spend most of our time focused on them!

The answer to joy and happiness is almost too simple. All we need to do is to completely turn our problems over to God and allow Him to control them. You've no doubt heard the statement, "Why worry, when you can pray?". Well, that's not just a statement, but a TRUTH that most of us need to learn and apply to our lives. God IS in control – why not TRUST Him?

The reason so many Christians live unhappily is because they look at all their problems through their own eyes, instead of through the eyes of God. God has promised over and over in His Word that if we only trust and obey Him, He will most certainly take care of us. True happiness is not found in the facts of life or the circumstances we find ourselves in, but in how we look at those facts and

circumstances. We should not be so busy looking at our problems and troubles that we forget to allow the only one who can truly take care of them do so. It is not what is around us, but what is inside us; not what we have, but what we are that makes us happy.

Proverbs 3:5-6 is a passage which many of us know by memory, but seldom put into practice. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” This passage of Scripture instructs us plainly and simply to TRUST GOD! We cannot understand the infinite mind of God. We cannot begin to figure out His perfect plan, but He has EVERYTHING under control.

We can only experience TRUE HAPPINESS when we learn to fall into His everlasting, almighty, powerful arms and rest, not in what we know about, but in WHO we trust! It is really a simple decision to make. Either trust Him and find Him as the source of TRUE HAPPINESS, or worry and fret over everything we have no control over, and be miserable. We too often find that the easiest remedies for our problems are the ones we never apply. We expect there to be some massive undertaking we must go through when it all boils



down to “Do I TRUST God?”

Proverbs 29:25 reminds us, “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.” TRUE HAPPINESS is available. The question is, are we willing to do what it takes to find it? When we finally learn to fear God, trust God, and obey God, we will find it! This world claims to offer all sorts of happiness, yet they are all temporary, and not real. The peace and joy that God offers is an eternal peace and happiness from the heart that will last forever. “The Lord is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him..” (Psalm 28:7)

The greatest love story you'll ever hear is found in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." God loves you and wants to know you. I know in today's world, there are a lot of misconceptions about God, but I know from my own experience how great a friend He is to those who love Him and learn to trust Him. Get to know Him - you'll never regret it.

## **Trust and Obey**

Louisa M. R. Stead

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,  
    What a glory He sheds on our way!  
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,  
    And with all who will trust and obey.  
    Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
    To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,  
    But His smile quickly drives it away;  
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,  
    Can abide while we trust and obey.  
    Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
    To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

## **ABOUT JOSHUA**

Joshua Goodling is a terminal cancer survivor, speaker, and author. At the age of four, He was diagnosed with cancer, and given just one week to live. The doctors said his chances were zero! That was over 50 years ago, so it's been a LONG week! Joshua's life is a testimony of how truly amazing and powerful God is, and how He has a perfect plan for each of our lives. All we must do is have faith in Him, love Him, trust Him, and obey Him!

If you have any comments or questions about truly knowing and experiencing God, visit Joshua's website or contact him.

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