

The Truth About Happiness

Beatitudes: Introduction – Part 1 – Matthew 5:1-12

“When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’”
Matthew 5:1-3

“Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” – Abraham Lincoln¹

I have not come across too many people who plan and work towards being miserable. People have a desire to be happy. Those who are not happy are not fun to be around. It makes me wonder if happiness can be contagious.

Describe what a happy person looks like to you.

Jesus is concerned about our happiness. I know sometimes we feel like God is a kill-joy, trying to snuff out any attempt to enjoy happiness, but Jesus’ first recorded sermon starts out with the keys to happiness. Now before you write this lesson off as health, wealth, and prosperity preaching, open your Bibles to Matthew 5.

Look at the first word of verses three through eleven. In many versions it will read, “Blessed.” A synonym of the word is “happy.” This passage is a treatise on how to be happy, but before we get too far into the treatise, there is some ground work that we need to do so that we can better understand happiness.

How would you define “happiness?”

We need to get into the original language a little to better understand what “blessed” means. *Makarios* is the Greek word which has as its root *makar*. This means to be happy. Both Homer and Hesiod spoke of the Greek gods as being happy within themselves. Happiness was described as a state of contentment and bliss which is unaffected by circumstances.

Contentment – now that’s a lost word in our society. We need to have the newest cell phone that syncs with the computer, music, and the toaster. We need to have the newest car that parks itself and the washer and dryer that sorts and folds laundry. Happiness, true happiness, involves contentment apart from circumstances.

Why do we find it so hard to be content?

¹ <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/31097.html>

*“For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”
2 Peter 1:4*

Max Lucado, in his book The Applause of Heaven, calls this happiness “sacred delight.” He explains sacred delight as being sacred because only God can grant it and a delight because it thrills. Lucado then explains that since it is sacred, it cannot be stolen, and since it is delightful, it cannot be predicted. He hit the nail on the head.

True happiness is something that does not come from the circumstances around us, but from the Spirit within us.

Why is it important to find happiness from within?

From here on out, we want to understand what God means by true happiness.

The word “blessed” indicates character. There are several passages in Scripture that describe God as blessed (Psalm 68:35; 72:18; 119:12; 1 Timothy 1:11). Jesus is spoken of as being blessed in 1 Timothy 6:15. True happiness is found in the character of God and His Son, Jesus. It flows from them into the hearts and souls of each child of God. Happiness is a part of the divine nature of God.

This leads to our next aspect of true happiness. Since true happiness is drawn from God, then those who do not know Christ cannot find this kind of happiness. 2 Peter 1:4 explains that we are partakers of the divine nature. As we seek to develop the character of Christ in us, we will become partakers of the true happiness that is in His character.

This is not to say that no one can be happy. There are a lot of happy people out there. The happiness spoken of here goes much deeper. It can only be embraced by those who know Christ as Savior. It is a happiness that is not based on an outward attitude or circumstances, but on an inward indwelling of the character of God.

In your own words, how does true happiness differ from happiness as defined by the world?

The world’s perspective is different from God’s perspective, but that should come as no surprise.

Look back to how you defined happiness earlier. Now think about what Jesus says. Those who are happy are poor in spirit, mourners, meek, hungry and thirsty, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and persecuted. It is not the list we would naturally come up with. The world has a much different list. It draws upon the things of the world to bring happiness, but Jesus calls us to draw upon the things of the Creator of the world to bring happiness. That is a huge difference.

Solomon was known as the wealthiest and wisest king of all time. He had it all, yet as he reflects back on his life he comes to realize that all is vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2). John warns us to “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15).

“...He who is the
blessed and only
Sovereign, the King of
kings and Lord of
lords...”
1 Timothy 6:15

The road to true happiness will directly contradict most, if not all, that you see on television and in the world. I can guarantee that the world can provide happiness, but it is a happiness that satisfies the flesh and is short-lived. True happiness lies in laying hold of our Creator and embracing the eternal rather than the temporal.

Blessed are those who look outside of their circumstances to find true happiness.

Do you want to be happy?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

