



I Know Marriage Would Make Me Happy

Editor's note: Today's article is the second in a series about "fine line" areas of our lives. Areas where we struggle to discern truth from sin. Areas we prefer not to deal with so that we can continue living on the edge, where the "fine line" is. To read about Judging vs. Accountability, [click here](#).

Part 2: A Fine Line: Happiness vs. Joy

Lord, please bring me a spouse. I know marriage can be hard but I truly believe it will bring me joy. I would be so happy and complete. I am just so unhappy being single.

Lord, I have worked so hard at my job and I need that promotion. I need that money. I need to buy more things, go more places, and dress better. I know if I looked better I would be much happier.

Lord, please, I pray with all my heart that my house loan gets approved. A house would provide a place to have a Bible study and invite family. I know it will make me happy and bring joy to so many.

Lord, I don't like this storm. Bills are up to my eyeballs, my health isn't great, my family is too demanding and I am struggling. I am not happy. Please take it away so I can be happy again, so that I will have joy.

Does any of this sound familiar? How many times have we lived our lives based on circumstances? How many times have those circumstances dictated our relationship with God, with others? I have had my own issues over the years with understanding the difference between happiness and joy. I have prayed for a spouse, prayed for my finances, and prayed that God would take away my pain. Why? So that life would be better. So that life would be happier. I mean, who wants to go around in a pain and misery all the time? But what God has been able to show me has had far greater value. He has taught and continues to teach me that happiness is not all that it's cracked up to be. Happiness is based on our circumstances. Circumstances that change like the wind.

He has shown me that true joy is based on our relationship with God. That through my earnest seeking of happiness, God was trying to teach me to have joy. This way I could be happy in all situations. I could be happy without a spouse, without the bigger home or new car, without more stuff, and without that juicy cheeseburger and fries.

So what is happiness versus joy? Is there really that much of a difference? Where is that fine line?

Happiness is based on circumstances. Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with being happy. I love being happy. I love getting excited about getting new stuff or a friend coming for a visit or a cute guy flirting with me. I love getting a massage, eating at my favorite restaurant or making jewelry. Happiness is not a sin. But knowing that it won't last is the issue. Circumstances change and as a result, happiness will.

The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy (1 Kings 4:20).



Happiness is temporary. Stuff gets old, it rusts, it falls apart. Friends and family leave, food gets eaten and you have to wait till you can afford another massage. My mother once told me the mountain top is a tiny place. The journey up to the mountain and then down the mountain is where the real growth is. As we walk up the mountain, our muscles are tested. We have to sometimes rest, pray, ask for help to continue the journey. Coming down, the path is easier but still has some danger. This is a time to evaluate the journey, look around and assess what worked and what didn't work. Then comes the valley, the lowest point. This is where we sometimes think God isn't listening. Where life is the hardest. But it really comes down to perspective. The valley is where the grass grows the greenest. And things only grow greener if there is plenty of fertilizer.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matthew 6:19-20).

Happiness will not fill you or take away your trouble. We are constantly looking for the world to fill us. We want more stuff, more money, more dates, more, more, more. Happiness becomes like a drug and we have this enormous appetite. Do you remember the enemy when he tempted Jesus? With what did he tempt him? Power, stuff, food, and health. The enemy knows our weak flesh and prowls, waiting for the next time to jump on us. Knowing this should help us in making decisions about what brings us true happiness. Being happy about seeing a friend, getting a date, buying a new outfit is fine as long as know it is not why we are living on this earth. Being happy will not take away the trouble. It may only mask it for a while. True happiness (joy) which comes from God can happen in the midst of our troubles.

He says to himself, “Nothing will shake me; I’ll always be happy and never have trouble” (Psalm 10:6)

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Happiness is self-focused versus God focused. Every day most of us are seeking to just be happy. We want a great day at work with no issues. We want our kids to be happy. We want to get along with family members. We want our washing machines to work, quick accessibility to the remote, great weather, easy traffic and no lines. But what does God want? Maybe he has allowed that pain in your family to draw you both to Him. Maybe the lines are long because God wants you to start a conversation with the person beside you about Christ. Maybe the weather will cause you drive slower and stop texting. Maybe not finding the remote will cause you to spend some quality time with your family, or with God. We should be God seekers versus happiness seekers. What is great about seeking God and what He wants, you can then enjoy being happy (even in the temporary circumstances) because God gave you this happiness. You begin to learn what real happiness is...joy.

When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future (Ecclesiastes 7:14).



Paul, an amazing leader, follower and teacher of God's word, shares in Philippians about being happy in Christ because of the joy in Christ. Paul is writing from prison, a note of encouragement and affirmation to the church in Philippi that he had started. Here are some valuable lessons he is teaching us about joy.

Joy results in thankfulness. When you are filled with God's Holy Spirit because you have accepted Christ into your heart and are saved, you will begin to experience true and lasting happiness: joy. You begin to see this life and all its ups and downs as something to be thankful for. Paul in his grim circumstances starts by saying how much he thanks God for them. Joy from God can't help but result in an attitude of gratefulness. This thankfulness allows you to be "happy" in all situations.

Joy comes from a life of prayer. Paul shares how he prays with joy. Prayer and joy are interchangeable. As you pray, growing your relationship with God, God will show you how to be joyful in all situations. As you practice being joyful, adjusting your attitude, allowing God to show you what He is doing, you will move into a place of such peace. Your prayer life will get better. You will see the changes that are being made in others, including yourself.

Joy comes from being Christ focused first and as a result, other-focused. As we focus on our relationship with God, seeking Him first, we will want to focus on bring others to Him. How powerful! You can just feel Paul's joy because he knows he is not alone. Jesus never meant for us to journey alone. There are others that also understand the purpose of life. I am so thankful for those who partner with me and my ministry. Those who are praying for me, encouraging me and helping me do the work of the Lord.

Joy is permanent. Once you have accepted Christ, joy stays with you. But we need encouragement to keep going in tough times. We need to be reminded that God has called, anointed, appointed, and equipped us to do HIS work. And it's not over till Christ comes back. Amazing... this work, this journey, this path is His path. Because I am doing what God has asked me to do, I can have the everlasting joy. It never will go away. It's not temporary or based on circumstances. It's forever, it's eternal.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:3-6).

Joy is the same in all situations. Paul shares how even in chains, in a dirty, smelly, prison, he is joyful because he knows the reason he is there. We need to look at our lives, praying for God to manifest His joy in all situations so that we can smile even in pain, in hurt, in brokenness and even in the unknown. That even if we have some temporary happiness in our lives, it does not consume us. Joy is what consumes us.

"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:7-8).



Joy encourages growth towards Christ and each other. This joy of knowing the Lord will grow through love of God and each other. As we come together in this love, we become powerful in Christ, reaching even more for the Lord. As we serve, pray together, share, and talk we grow stronger. Do you remember the acronym you learned when you were a kid? J=Jesus, O=Others, Y=Yourself. Maybe it's time to put it up on the wall again.

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

As you walk with the Lord, knowing what joy really is, you will begin to look at "being happy" differently. You will begin to see that although those new pair of jeans make you happy for now - it is temporary. You will then seek to find things that bring you lasting joy. Like hearing a child laugh, helping a handicapped person carry their groceries to the car, seeing a rainbow after a horrible storm, or paying for the next person in line at Starbucks. Because this kind of happiness comes from God. It becomes about Him and not about you.

But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful (Psalm 68:3).

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TheSinglesNetwork.org Ministries helps churches, pastors and single adult leaders evaluate, develop and support their single adult ministries through high-energy speaking engagements, results-oriented consulting and training and leadership development conferences and seminars. Click here to request a FREE "How to Start a Single Adult Ministry" guide.

FromHisHands.com Ministries is Kris' speaking ministry. If you've ever heard her speak, you know that Kris is the kind of speaker who keeps the crowd captivated, shares great information and motivates people to make a difference in the lives of those around them! She speaks to all church audiences on everything from "first impression" ministry to women's topics to singles and young adults. She can speak on a Sunday morning, at a woman's retreat or for a single adults conference. Bring Kris to your church today!

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