

Surprise! Scientists ‘Crack Code’ to Happiness

I love this quote by illustrious NASA scientist Dr. Robert Jastrow (1925-2008): “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountain of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”

I would just add to Dr. Jastrow’s keen insight, that it’s not theologians at large who have long lounged atop Mount Understanding. It is, more precisely, Judeo-Christian theologians. Indeed, with time and chance, even science can eventually catch up to God’s Word.

Case in point: Minnesota’s Mayo Clinic is one of the world’s most prestigious health institutions. With much fanfare, researchers there announced last week that they have “cracked the code to being happy.” “Imagine scientists coming up with an actual formula for happiness—a specific recipe for lifelong contentment and joy,” they tease.

Well, my forlorn little friends, imagine no more. These scientists boast of having “created just such a formula based on neuroscience and psychology.” For a mere \$—less than your daily dose of Zoloft and vodka—they’ll rush off to you “The Mayo Clinic Handbook for Happiness,” a “four-step self-help process” to finding “a lifetime of joy and contentment.”

“Happiness is a habit,” says the study’s chief researcher Dr. Amit Sood in the Daily Mail. “Some of us are born with it; others have to choose it.”

“Previous research has shown that our minds are hard-wired to focus on negative experiences. For our ancestors,” continues

the report, being perpetually PO'ed, "helped them stay alive, providing an evolutionary advantage in the face of danger." (Some of us attribute this to mankind's fallen, selfish, sinful nature, but we can go with that whole evolution thingy if it makes them feel better.)

Concludes the *Daily Mail*: "The book makes readers focus on a different positive emotion each day, such as gratitude, forgiveness and kindness."

Wait. Hold the Mayo. This is déjà vu all over again. What "book" are we talking about here? Where have we heard all this before—talk of gratitude, forgiveness, kindness and whatnot, leading to joy, contentment, happiness and so forth?

Anyway, click over to Mayo's related "How to be happy" page and you're given a little more detail.

"People who are happy seem to intuitively know that their happiness is the sum of their life choices, and their lives are built on the following pillars:

- Devoting time to family and friends
- Appreciating what they have
- Maintaining an optimistic outlook
- Feeling a sense of purpose
- Living in the moment

Look, I'm glad you're getting the message out, guys, but, c'mon, plagiarize much? This isn't a revolutionary "formula" "created" by "scientists" and "based on neuroscience and psychology." While it's all true, you're a bit late to the game. Dr. Jastrow's theologians have been well acclimated to this lofty altitude for, oh, about 2,000 years. You guys have more degrees than a thermometer. You should know to cite your original source.

So, let's break it down. Though there are many to choose from, and while the following is in no way comprehensive, let's

contrast Mayo's "breakthrough" happiness pillars to but a few of their long-established counterparts in the original "handbook for happiness:"

Devoting Time to Family and Friends

"And let us consider how to spur one another to love and to good works. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but let us exhort one another, especially as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

"A man who has friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).

"This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13).

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17).

"Be devoted to one another with brotherly love; prefer one another in honor" (Rom. 12:10).

Appreciating What They Have

"Let your lives be without love of money, and be content with the things you have. For He has said: 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Heb. 13:5).

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with these things" (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

"I do not speak because I have need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

Maintaining an Optimistic Outlook

"I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

"Have not I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9).

"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

"My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations" (James 1:2).

"A merry heart does good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Prov. 17:22).

Feeling a Sense of Purpose

"I will cry to God Most High, to God who vindicates me" (Ps. 57:2).

"Whatever your hands find to do, do with your strength; for there is no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, the place where you are going" (Eccl. 9:10).

"The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; do not forsake the works of Your hands" (Ps. 138:8).

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it delays, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay" (Hab. 2:3).

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" (Col. 3:23).

Living in the Moment

"Therefore, take no thought about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take thought about the things of itself. Sufficient to the day

is the trouble thereof" (Matt. 6:34).

"Therefore, take no thought, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' (For the Gentiles seek after all these things.) For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things" (Matt. 6:31, 32).

"(W)hile it is said: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion'" (Heb. 3:15).

Still, ultimately, Jesus Himself sums it all accordingly: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me" (John 14:1).

The Mayo Clinic's pilfered wisdom notwithstanding, that, my friends, is "the actual formula for happiness."

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