

Does God Want You to Be Happy?

God never said that He wants you to be happy. But here's what He has in mind for you that's so much better.

The pursuit of happiness is like a north star that guides so many of us today. Think about its power. We enter into relationships because they make us *feel* happy. Most of our ambitions are driven by the idea that accomplishing a certain goal will make us happy. And the moment we realize that any of these don't bring us the happiness we expected, we move on to something or *someone* else.

The Danger of Happiness

So what exactly is this motivating force that has the world under its spell? Well, happiness is defined as a "feeling of pleasure." It's an emotion of euphoria, excitement or bliss. And therein lies the problem. Because happiness is an emotion, it can come and go. One day you feel it and the next day you don't. This is why it's so dangerous to make serious decisions based upon whether or not you feel happy.

Certainly, God wants you to enjoy your life and find peace and satisfaction in living. He doesn't want you to be miserable or downcast. But we each must be careful that we don't look to people, possessions or life circumstances to give us our sense of well-being. Your spouse was never intended to make you feel good all the time. Your work was never intended to be the source of your security. Your house, car, boat or bank account was never meant to be the measuring stick of your success. Don't pin your reason for living on any of these ever-changing things.

The Stability of Joy

God provides something so much better for us—something that remains. The Bible says that God provides us *joy*. And the difference is substantial. Whereas happiness is a fleeting emotion, joy is a *state* of gladness, peace and contentment. It is the result of decisions you make to trust in the unchanging qualities of God and the assurances of His Word. This is why you can be joyful and content through trials, times of sorrow or even when things aren't going your way.

How to Cultivate the Joy of the Lord

The Bible assures you that the joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Thankfully, cultivating joy is simple. Begin by shifting your focus from what's going on around you to the promises of God—promises such as:

- God is my protector.
- God is my comforter.
- God is the lifter of my head.

Do you feel a sense of joy arise within you when you read those? As often as you can, meditate upon God's promises and declare them aloud! When you stop chasing an ever-changing feeling and set your eyes on your never-changing God, you'll experience a peace and satisfaction that endures the tests of time. {eoa}

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