

Thy Word Is a Lamp Unto My Feet: The Bible for Today
The Bible and Happiness

Lesson #10 for June 9, 2007

Scriptures: Luke 21:36; John 8:32; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3:13; 1 Peter 3:15; 4:12-14; 1 John 1:4.

1. Why is happiness so important? Why does the Declaration of Independence state that “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” are “self-evident” and “unalienable Rights” which governments are to obtain for their citizens. Are we to always be pursuing the goal of happiness because it is a goal which is impossible to reach? Is happiness really elusive? Is the Christian’s happiness in knowing that some day he will be able to leave this messy world and go to heaven? Do you think it would be possible for a true Christian, a member of the 144,000, to be happy even through the seven last plagues? How?
2. If there were no promise of heaven, would Christians still be happy? Is the Christian’s happiness really “pie in the sky”?
3. Does everyone have the same idea of happiness? Are the suicide bombers in Iraq happy as they pull the triggers? Why?
4. There are a number of promises in the Bible such as: we will not be tested more than we are able to bear. The Bible suggests that we should be on our watch; we should not become discouraged; if we suffer persecution, it is because we are merely sharing the sufferings of Christ. Ultimately, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. (John 8:32) Do these promises add to your happiness?
5. What do you think Jesus had in mind in John 10:10 when He said, “I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness” (GNB)?
6. God promised to take the children of Israel into Canaan as a healthy, happy, holy people if they followed His directions.

God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in “because of unbelief.” Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them. {*Manuscript 4, 1883; Ev 696.1; 1SM 68.3*}

What relationship is there between health, happiness, and holiness?

7. “Pain, suffering, and unhappiness are the result of our separation from God; only to the degree, then, that we return to Him can we find the happiness that we all long for but that the world itself doesn’t offer.” (*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 113) If this is true, does it mean that Christians are the happiest people in the world? Is it apparent to the world around us that we are very happy? Is that the explanation for Matthew 5:16: “In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your father in heaven.” (GNB)
8. Those who analyze human behavior and feelings recognize that much of the happiness as well as much of the unhappiness in the world today comes from the family unit. How do the biblical principles that Christians are supposed to be following help us to have happier families?
9. Does the devil work extra hard to keep Christian families unhappy? Read Luke 21:16: “You will be handed over by your parents, your brothers, your relatives, and your friends; and some of you will be put to death. Everyone will hate you because of me.” (GNB) Does that sound like a happy existence?

10. What is it that really brings happiness? Is it having things? Nice houses? Nice cars? Lots of money? A high-paying job?
11. What did Jesus have in mind when He said we would be rewarded a hundredfold for everything we suffer in this life? (Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:30)
12. After surveying a few newspapers each morning, none of us should question the fact that while God intended for us to live a healthy, holy, happy life, this will not be possible until sin is eradicated.
13. If one scans through the Old Testament he will observe that at times when the children of Israel were trying to carefully follow God's guidance for them, they would celebrate with great joy and happiness at the temple in Jerusalem. Read, for example, Leviticus 23:40; Deuteronomy 12:7,12,18; 16:11; 2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 13:1-14. Sour-faced Christians can never correctly represent the God we worship.
14. There is much scientific evidence to validate the fact that people who have faith in God live happier, healthier, longer lives than those who do not. What do you think is the scientific explanation for this fact? Is it because we have someone to look to in times of trouble? Is it because we have something to look forward to beyond this life? What changed in the 11 disciples between crucifixion weekend and Pentecost?
15. There are also other reasons why Christians are happier. God gives us clear principles on which to base our lives. They are based on the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:7-21) and on the one commandment on which they are based, the commandment of love (Matthew 22:34-40; Romans 13:8-10). God also gives us many other guidelines for living happy, healthy lives: we should always be on watch (Luke 21:36); we should always consider others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3); and we should forgive one another when we do something wrong (Colossians 3:13). But, we also need to recognize that there will be times when we will suffer just as Christ suffered (1 Peter 4:1,2). During those times and in all times in our lives, we should be controlled by the Holy Spirit which really means to be under the guidance of God but self-controlled (Galatians 5:23); and ultimately, we should love one another (Galatians 5:22,23). To live in such a community would certainly give one a sense of security, peace, and happiness.
16. Does it make you happy to know that you belong to God by creation (Genesis 1:26,27) and also by redemption (1 Corinthians 6:19,20)?
17. Marriage is undoubtedly the closest, most meaningful, and yet, most troublesome human relationship. Why is it that more than 50% of American couples divorce? And Seventh-day Adventists are not far behind! The marriage relationship has the potential for producing great happiness, but it also can be the cause of great disappointment! The closer we are to someone and the more we open up ourselves to them, the greater opportunity they have to hurt us. The Scriptures give us guidelines to try to protect us, as far as possible, from such human disasters as divorce. We are advised: to marry only "like believers" (2 Corinthians 6:14-16); to be completely loyal to each other (Hebrews 13:14); and to make direct and frequent efforts to express love and appreciation for each other (Song of Solomon 7:1-9). We could also mention the famous adage: "The family that prays together stays together."
18. What other principles that could apply to our family relationships are suggested by Scripture? Our lives should be dedicated to God and expressed in intelligent worship (Romans 12:1). We must learn not to live for ourselves alone (Romans 14:7). We must live holy lives because we are God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16,17). We must care for our bodies, our surroundings, and our relationships always as if they were holy things, just like a temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

19. The Christian always has the possibility of “coming to Christ” who will give us rest. (Matthew 11:28) Furthermore, Christians believe in forgiveness. While it is always best not to do something wrong, the Christian has a backup plan called “forgiveness.”
20. Paul went far beyond that. He expressed his opinion by stating in Philippians 1:18-21 that even when in prison and expecting to die, he could be happy because his life was being given for the gospel of Christ. He had experienced what it was like to be a representative of the gospel in the truest sense.
21. The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. *Great Controversy* p. 493

If Christians can learn to live truly Christ-like lives, they will be able to experience the greatest form of earthly happiness.

22. In Ephesians 5&6, Paul spells out the responsibilities of each of the members of a family to the others. How would you compare Paul’s suggested responsibilities of husbands with those of wives and those of children?
23. Even at the time of creation, God recognized that there would need to be some type of institution to embody and pass on the principles of His government to those who would be born. That was intended to be one of the main functions of the family. How far we have wandered from that ideal! How much of the unhappiness in marriages today is directly attributable to selfishness on the part of one or more of those involved? When people are acting in that way, how can they correctly represent God’s love to their children? If children never have the opportunity to experience true God-like love, how can they ever learn it?
24. While it should always be our goal to live Christ-like lives, it is helpful to look at the lives of God’s best friends in Scripture. Would you describe the lives of Abraham, David, and Paul as happy? What about Moses, Job, and Daniel?
25. The only true happiness comes in a full and complete, faith-based relationship with Jesus Christ. When we come to know Him and trust Him in every aspect of our lives, nothing can destroy our happiness. Jesus describes such individuals by saying things like: “Their names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Luke 10:20); and “I leave you my peace” (John 14:27). Paul said that the only goal of his life was to be like Christ so that one day, “I myself will be raised from death to life” (Philippians 3:7-11). Peter assured us that we “can face all things by the power that Christ gives us” (1 Peter 4:12-14).
26. How many people living in our world today have really experienced unconditional love? Are we practicing giving it? Are our spouses, our children, and our friends blessed because of their association with us?
27. Is happiness more than a feeling? How would you define it? Is it realistic to expect to be happy at all times? Does God expect us to be?
28. How should we relate to fellow Christians who are going through difficult times and obviously are not happy? Could we be happy even while going through sufferings?

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