



Happiness in America

“Those who love their life in this world will lose it.” –John 12:25 NLT

Time Magazine said that Scandinavians are the happiest people on earth. If you were to inquire with most Americans to see if they were happy...if you were to ask them about how they were doing or about what they wanted from life, you'd probably hear, *“Man, I just really want to be happy.”*

In fact, the right to pursue total happiness in America seems to be like a constitutional guarantee these days. People feel it is owed to them. Unfortunately, many people are looking for joy in all the wrong places: a new job, a new car, more money, the right relationship, a new place to live. We tend to believe that happiness is dependent on what we do or don't have. But the truth is, real joy is not dependent on circumstances; real joy comes from knowing Christ intimately.

Who is a better example of this than the Apostle Paul? In the course of his ministry, Paul was shipwrecked, beaten, imprisoned, and eventually put to death. That kind of stuff has never happened to me. Yet, in the midst of all his trials, he joyfully proclaimed, *“To live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Phil. 1:21). You see, for Paul, there was no downside, life and death had no sway over his happiness. He remained full of joy because he knew that nothing could take him away from the love of God. Now that's radical joy!

Paul to the Philippians said, *“I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel”* (Phil. 1:12). Amidst great difficulties, Paul recognized that a life of service to God had brought lasting happiness. Paul willingly faced any hardship that came his way for the opportunity to tell others of the tremendous joy he found in Jesus Christ. He encouraged fellow believers to *“fulfill [his] joy by being like-minded.”* In other words, Paul wanted everyone to find the happiness he'd found in knowing Christ and telling others about Jesus despite their circumstances.

“If you live for yourself, you'll never find yourself.” –G. Laurie

“I've never been happy. I've never been happy a day in my life.” –Multi-Millionaire Howard Stern

“God made the human machine to run on Himself” –C.S. Lewis

We were precisely fitted for a spiritual relationship with the God who made us. Maybe you're feeling downcast and hopeless today. Maybe you feel chained to a job, relationship, or responsibility that has hindered your happiness. I encourage you right now to look beyond your circumstances and embrace the joy that comes independent of all circumstances—the joy of knowing Jesus and boldly sharing His mammoth size love with others. When you can say with Paul, *"To live is Christ, and to die is gain,"* you have found true happiness ...an eternal happiness!

True happiness evades those who seek it directly, but it overtakes those who properly apply Mathew 6:33 – it's the byproduct of a vertically-orientated, horizontally-compassionate life.

Have Kurt's fishing devos blessed you? Click on the "Contact" button and let him know!

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