

## “The Secret of Happiness - Gratitude”

Scripture: Philippians 1

Graphics: smiley face

Big Truth: The secret to happiness seems to be something that we desire and even chase after, but often don't experience. Life circumstances, family relationships, work, school, and many other things rob us of our joy. The Apostle Paul had every reason to be unhappy, but he was filled with joy because of the people that loved him, partnered with him, and were growing in Christ. Paul gave us a formula for the secrets to happiness - gratitude, humility, death, and celebration.

Focus Phrase: Gratitude is joy lived out and expressed in happiness.

### 1. Introduction

- A. What IS the secret to happiness? It's a question that's as old as the question about the meaning of life or what is God's plan for my life?
- B. Is happiness about what we have? Does having more stuff make us happy?
- C. Is happiness about who we know? Do our relationships have an impact on our happiness? Or our jobs or choices or hobbies or sports teams? (We know that last one is certainly NOT true).
- D. Some say it's all about money...that those with money are happier. Well... “In the 1970s, economist George Easterlin found that while income in the United States grew following World War II, reported happiness in the country didn't keep pace. Over time, the so-called Easterlin Paradox has been refined - money does increase happiness to certain degrees - but the data suggests that once basic necessities like food, shelter and health care are secured, income falls out of step with happiness.” (<https://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/emotions/10-tips-from-happy-people.htm>)
- E. So it's not really about having lots of money. Although, as some have suggested, I might like to test that theory for a day just to be sure. But alas, the Lord has not given me that opportunity.
- F. Others are adamant that close relationships are the real secret to happiness. That seems to be getting closer, since relationships are not something you can count and put in the bank. Love is not a currency that can really be quantified.
- G. So...what IS the secret to happiness? Well, since that's the title of our new sermon series, maybe we'll find out from the Apostle Paul. What we'll find is that Paul's secrets to happiness are gratitude, humility, death, and celebration.
- H. Now, the Apostle Paul, as you probably know, went from a persecutor of Christians in the first century, to a sold-out evangelist for the Good News about Jesus. And not only did he become one of the most prolific church planters in the 1st Century, he was also persecuted for that, beaten, often run out of town, and (as we see in his letter to the Philippians), was thrown in prison for large chunks of time after his conversion.

- I. YET (and here's where we're going) YET, even though he was in prison after being beaten and persecuted for his faith in Jesus, Paul was **happy**...he was joyful (and we'll talk about the difference in a minute). Paul was content and had vision and a hope for the future.
- J. But what was Paul's secret to happiness? And can WE find happiness in this life? And, honestly, if we can, then it would be a counter-cultural statement for followers of Jesus to make in a world that seems more depressed and sadder than we've ever been.
- K. Let's pray and find out... **PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**
- L. For this sermon series, we're going to walk through the entire book of Philippians...all four chapters. We won't read every word of every chapter, but we'll focus in on the secrets to happiness that Paul expresses in this letter.
- M. Throughout this letter, Paul expressed joy, rejoiced, and celebrated with this little group of believers who were worshiping, praying, giving, and working together for the sake of Jesus Christ and their faith in Jesus.
- N. As I look at us (Wow, we're good-looking!), there are many similarities to be seen. And WE too can find happiness in the midst of our discipleship and worship and life together.
- O. Turn with me to Philippians 1...

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ Philippians 1:1-11

- i. Gratitude is one secret to happiness. But how does Paul stay happy?
- ii. Paul, here, wrote this letter from a Roman prison. Now, you may have a concept of prisons in our modern era, but Roman prisons were not that. When Paul was thrown in jail, he didn't have a place to sit, other than the floor. He was chained to the wall. It was dark. It was cold. It was stone. He didn't get food or water unless the guards were gracious or someone from the outside brought that to him. It was miserable.
- iii. So WHY, then, in the midst of this kind of misery did Paul write that he was, "...constantly praying with JOY in every one of my prayers for all of you..." in this letter to the church in Philippi?
- iv. Seriously, Paul? JOY?
- v. I guess now is a good time to talk a bit about the difference between happiness and joy.
  - a. Compassion International has a really good comparison, which I think will help us: What is joy? What is happiness? And what is the difference between joy and happiness? The difference between joy and happiness lives in the mind and heart.

- i) Joy is a little word. Happiness is a bigger word.
  - ii) Joy is in the heart. Happiness is on the face.
  - iii) Joy is of the soul. Happiness is of the moment.
  - iv) Joy transcends. Happiness reacts.
  - v) Joy embraces peace and contentment, waiting to be discovered.
  - vi) Joy runs deep and overflows, while happiness hugs hello.
  - vii) Joy is a practice and a behavior. It's deliberate and intentional.  
Happiness comes and goes blithely along its way.
  - viii) Joy is profound and Scriptural. "Don't worry, rejoice." Happiness is a balm. "Don't worry, be happy."
  - ix) Joy is an inner feeling. Happiness is an outward expression.
  - x) Joy endures hardship and trials and connects with meaning and purpose.
  - xi) A person pursues happiness but chooses joy.
  - xii) Choose joy. Practice joy. Know joy. Live joy. Feel happiness.
- b. I like that. Happiness sometimes gets a bad rap, especially when we talk about joy. Happiness is not bad. In fact, God gave us 43 muscles in our faces that are used for smiling to show happiness to the world and to ourselves.
- vi. The problem often is that we may be experiencing a deep sense of joy, but we don't allow that to radiate out from us in the form of happiness. Happiness is an outward expression to the world BASED ON our inner sense of joy. It's not the goal - joy is the goal - but happiness the outworking of the joy inside us that comes from knowing that Jesus is our Lord and Savior and that we have nothing to fear...even death!
  - vii. When Paul wrote these words from a terrible physical place, you can almost feel the smile on his face in his words as he allowed the JOY in him to gush out. And it was all rooted in the thankfulness - the gratitude - that he felt because of the Philippians.
  - viii. Joy that was expressed in happiness that he was thankful that the church was in partnership with him in spreading the Good News about Jesus. He wasn't alone!
  - ix. Joy that was expressed in happiness that he was thankful that the church was growing in love and holiness (being set apart for God's purposes).
  - x. Joy that was expressed in happiness that he was thankful that the church was bearing the fruit of righteousness (right relationship with God) that brings glory to God and praise to God.
  - xi. See, Paul wrote this letter gushing with gratitude so that the joy he felt could be expressed as happiness in that moment, despite the pit he was in.

- xii. Gratitude is joy lived out and expressed in happiness.
- xiii. The middle part of this chapter gives us more information about Paul's imprisonment. We won't read that, but let me encourage you to take some time this week to read Philippians 1 every day as a spiritual discipline. Maybe listen to it on your bible app.

**B. (READ Philippians 1:12-26)**

- i. Let me summarize before we get to the final section.
- ii. Paul wrote that he was thankful for his imprisonment because it allowed him to share the gospel with the imperial guards...and others were becoming bold because of the witness of Paul. He was thankful.
- iii. And it didn't matter that he was in prison, because the gospel was being proclaimed either way.
- iv. So much so, that Paul said that it didn't matter whether he was in prison or free, or even dead or alive! He wrote, "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain." (verse 24) If he lived, joy and happiness are rooted in sharing the gospel with everyone. If he died, then joy and happiness would be his because he'd be in the presence of Jesus. WIN-WIN!
- v. Gratitude is joy lived out and expressed in happiness. Gratitude in LIFE and gratitude in DEATH!
- vi. Then, Paul got to the final part...verse 27...let's read that...

**C. READ Philippians 1:27-30**

- i. The secret to happiness is gratitude. Paul was filled with gratitude and joy that led to happiness because he saw what was going on in the church.
- ii. And he wanted more of that...and he wanted THEM to experience the same happiness that he was feeling. He wanted them to have the joy of following Jesus no matter the circumstances.
- iii. So...he commanded them:
  - a. Live your life in a manner that's worthy of the gospel. Look, Jesus died for their sins and was raised from the dead to give them victory over sin and death. That should fill them all with gratitude and joy. And when we have gratitude that leads to joy, then that gets expressed in happiness.
  - b. He said, "Stand firm"...against the intimidation of your opponents...in one spirit...side-by-side together. This little church in Philippi was surrounded by pagans and Romans who wanted them to be quiet, at best, or dead at worst. The church had something powerful - they had Jesus. And they had each other. They could lock arms and stand firm - the image is digging your heels in and stand firm, ready for an attack.

- c. One more source of gratitude was the privilege of knowing Christ AND suffering for Christ, just like Paul. Now, you might think that suffering and happiness are mutually exclusive. You'd be wrong. The Philippian church knew Christ and were thankful. And, as evidence that they were following Jesus - who suffered and died - they too were experiencing suffering. One way to get a good read on how you're doing as a disciple is to take inventory of the suffering in your life to make sure that it's because you're following Jesus. Spiritual attacks are not fun, but they ARE an indication that the devil doesn't like what you're doing. When those come...then you're on the right track to living in a manner worthy of the gospel. You can be happy about that!

### 3. Application

- A. Gratitude is joy lived out and expressed in happiness.
- B. But how do we get there, based on what Paul has shared this morning? We know that gratitude leads to joy which gets expressed in happiness.
- C. Yet, in order to get to happiness, we need to experience the joy. And joy, starts in the heart with gratitude. Thanksgiving. Counting your blessings and then letting those start to blossom and grow in your heart.
- D. Here are a few ways to plant those seeds.
  - i. #1 - **Spend time with other believers who love Jesus and love you.**
    - a. Be thankful for the sisters and brothers sitting next to you. Be thankful for the ones who are striving with you in ministry, in prayer, in worship. Don't neglect to come together to praise God and work side-by-side for the gospel.
    - b. And when you do, talk about the things that Jesus is doing in your life that bring you joy. Be thankful for the things Jesus is doing in other people's lives. In the church. In the world!
    - c. We sometimes get so jealous that other people are happier or have more joy. Instead of resenting that, choose to embrace the joy Jesus has given you. Spend time with joyful people and you'll find that happiness grows in you as well!
    - d. I spent some time last week with a woman named Joy. And, she is just infectious and loves Jesus and loves to share her joy! I found myself smiling every time she talked!
  - ii. #2 - **Spend time giving thanks to Jesus for His saving grace.**
    - a. Look - you're eternally saved, you're sins are forgiven, and nothing in this world can ever steal that from you because Jesus did that. Why do we let ANYTHING rob us of that joy?!

- b. Your job is to be thankful every day to Jesus who gives you the gift of salvation and calls you to deeper levels of joy and happiness.
  - c. Meister Eckhart said “If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is -Thank You- it will be enough.” (Meister Eckhart, Gratitude)
  - d. Say thank you to Jesus so that your heart is so filled with gratitude, even when life stinks, that joy takes root in your heart and happiness is born onto your face.
  - e. That leads to the last point...
- iii. #3 - No matter what your circumstances, **find ONE THING that brings you joy, and then smile.**
- a. This world needs more smiling. Genuine smiling. In fact, when I talk about smiling, your face wants to smile! SMILE! It’s fun! It feels great!
  - b. God wants you to feel great! God wants you to smile! God wants you to have joy in your heart because of Jesus.
  - c. Find ONE THING right now that brings you joy. Give thanks for that. And then smile about that! Go ahead...
  - d. God loves you! I love you! Besides, what’s the old saying, “Smile. People will think you’re up to something.” It’s true. And as a follower of Jesus, you’re up to loving and forgiving and worshiping and praying and serving and giving...you’re up to ALL GOOD!

#### 4. Conclusion

- A. (picture of smiling Jesus) This is a photograph I took of Jesus when he wasn’t looking. (I’m kidding) This is what Jesus thinks when he sees you...when he sees your heart filled with thanks.
- B. This week, don’t go searching after the secret to happiness in money or the Bills games or vacations. There may happiness there, possibly, but it won’t last.
- C. Happiness that is grown from the joy in your heart WILL last. The secret is to be thankful for Jesus...thankful for those around you...and thankful for this life He is giving you to live every day in Him!
- D. Gratitude is joy lived out and expressed in happiness.
- E. So...be happy! Go Bills!
- F. Let’s pray...