



"To get the full value of joy you must have someone to divide it with."

—Mark Twain

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Be Happy (Part Two)

We serve a God who is positive, working toward a glorious future for Himself and the multitudes of sons and daughters He is preparing for that wonderful world tomorrow. He has made it possible through His Spirit for us to be optimistic and happy even in a world that seems to be crumbling around us. At the very least, we can strive to develop attitudes that will help us be happier in our lives. In Part One, we considered the first three of the seven distinctive attitudes researchers have found to be common in happy people. Here are the last four:

The fourth attitude of happy people is that they *share happiness with others*. When a person is especially happy, he wants to share this feeling with others to make them happy too. This sharing of positive feelings increases the sharer's overall happiness and promotes an enhanced sense of well-being, improved health, and even longevity. Positive emotions, researchers say, boost both physical and psychological resilience.

Solomon advises us that expressing joy should be a top priority in life: "I know nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives" (Ecclesiastes 3:12). He also writes in Proverbs 15:13, "A merry heart makes

a cheerful countenance." Centuries later, Paul reminds [Christians](#) how much God appreciates our sharing of good things with others who need them: "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" ([Hebrews 13:16](#)). Sharing our Christian life-experiences—especially the happy, uplifting ones—with others in our fellowship helps to lead them to happiness. God would [love](#) to see His people overflowing with joy and positive feelings toward each other.

The fifth attitude is that happy people know *material wealth plays only a small part* in their happiness. "Money cannot buy happiness," goes the old saying. Recent data suggests that those who pursue material goods tend to be less satisfied and content, and express fewer positives. Not only does the pursuit of wealth not bring happiness, it is a strong predictor of *unhappiness*. The more materialism drives someone, the less happy he or she becomes as a result.

One study examined the attitudes of 12,000 college freshman (18 years old), then followed up on their life-satisfaction when they were thirty-seven. Those who had expressed materialistic aspirations as freshmen were less satisfied with their lives two decades later. Accumulation of things does not satisfy. It may provide a temporary high, if you will, but no deep satisfaction comes from it. However, studies say a good, positive relationship contributes significantly to overall happiness.

The Bible has a great deal to say on the subject. Notice [I Timothy 6:9-10:](#)

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the [faith](#) in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

It is far better to develop a relationship with God! There is a wonderful future in that, as [Psalm 146:5](#) reminds us, "Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the [LORD](#) his God."

Attitude number six is that happy people tend to *live in the moment*. Psychologists agree that focusing on the here and now is key to a positive

temperament, as it allows a person to experience the fullness of what is happening around him, including feelings of joy and contentment. Recall the children playing in the park in Part One. Happy children do not gaze longingly at yesterday or place all their hopes on a vague tomorrow. They take each moment as it comes.

[James 4:13-14](#) cautions:

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

[Proverbs 27:1](#) contains similar instruction: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth."

As for the past, speaking of his pedigree and accomplishments, the apostle Paul writes, "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" ([Philippians 3:8](#)). While we should learn the lessons of the past and strive toward the future reality of God's Kingdom, we must live fully in the present to do the will of God and please Him.

Finally, the seventh attitude is that happy people have *direction*. They are working toward meaningful goals, holding values that they care about and progressing toward outcomes that are worthwhile. A 2011 study found that those who set higher goals tend to be more satisfied with their lives. When we make progress toward such goals, we feel happier and more contented.

We can be thankful that God has called us and given us direction. Paul addresses this God-given path of the Christian life in [Philippians 3:13-14](#):

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The Bible frequently urges us to "seek the L_{ORD}," a similar concept. [Isaiah 55:6](#) says, "Seek the L_{ORD} while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." [Amos 5:6](#) commands us, "Seek the L_{ORD} and live." And [I Chronicles 16:10](#) couples [seeking God](#) with rejoicing: "Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the L_{ORD}!" We can conclude that this pursuit of God, His way, and His goal will fill us with happiness.

Solomon writes in [Proverbs 16:20](#), "He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the L_{ORD}, happy is he." Those who compiled this list of attitudes of happy people were doctors of psychology who could see only some aspects of what makes people truly happy. Their findings came through observations of carnal people, and though they mention morality, they do not fully comprehend the truth that God reveals in His Word. Specifically, they do not know the greatest factor in human happiness, found in [Psalm 144:15](#): "Happy are the people whose God is the L_{ORD}."

- Gary Montgomery

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Joy in the Lord](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Americans relish their equality and their rights, including the right to pursue happiness. Thomas Jefferson would not have approved today's presumptuous interpretation of his words, "the pursuit of happiness." This concept's classical philosophical lineage goes back to John Locke, who envisioned it as encompassing the perfection of human intellect rather than the modern notion of the satisfaction of inordinate, prurient desires. The Greeks understood the pursuit of happiness as the perfection of ethics—arête—a civic virtue to create a better society. In this way, Jefferson believed that every American citizen had the right to participate in government, which British subjects did not have under King George III. The biblical concept of joy is similarly misunderstood by most people as a good feeling or a fleeting pleasure. Biblical joy is more a pure elation of spirit (a profound gladness) in

knowing God, culminating in our eventual placement in His Kingdom. As a fruit of the Spirit, joy does not come naturally. As a metaphorical fruit, it takes a while to grow and mature. Godly joy is infinitely more intense than human pleasure generated solely through emotion. Our joy must be in God rather than in fleeting temporal pleasures detached from God's blessing. David observed that God puts more joy in our hearts than we derive from any physical source, saying that He lifts the light of His countenance, thereby reminding us we are His children and continually in His sight. We need to follow James' counsel to look upon even our trials with joy because they are evidence that He is working with us, generating a joy that will last through eternity, the same joy God has within Him.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[**The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy**](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Joy, the second fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22, is more than just happiness. There is a joy that God gives that far exceeds mere human cheerfulness. John Ritenbaugh shows how the Holy Spirit produces it in us.

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