

"I can give no higher recommendation than this book—I want to give this one to everyone I know. Ten stars." —ANN VOSKAMP, *New York Times* bestselling author of *One Thousand Gifts* and *The Greatest Gift*

# HAPPINESS



RANDY  
ALCORN

## Happiness

Part 1: Our Compelling Quest for Happiness

### Chapter 2

WHAT DOES OUR LONGING FOR HAPPINESS  
REVEAL ABOUT US?

Cornerstone Community Church

IMPACT Hour

Clay Stidham, Jr.

## Chapter 2: What Does Our Longing for Happiness Reveal About Us?

*Happy are the people who know the joyful shout; Yahweh, they walk in the light of Your presence.*

PSALM 89:15, HCSB

*Give me an explanation, first, of the towering eccentricity of man among the brutes; second, of the vast human tradition of some ancient happiness.*

G. K. CHESTERTON

## Chapter 2: What Does Our Longing for Happiness Reveal About Us?

- We fail to see the futility of our own attempts to find happiness.
- Many people try the age-old practices of turning to money, sex, power, beauty, sports, nature, music, art, education, work, or celebrity for happiness.
- In the end, each of these proves as big a lie.
- **ASK PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT OUT OF LIFE, AND THEY'LL ANSWER, "TO BE HAPPY."**
  - How many subjects do Puritans, philosophers, atheists, and agnostics emphatically agree on? One of the few is our innate longing for happiness.
- **WHERE DOES OUR DESIRE FOR HAPPINESS LEAD US?**
  - The human race is homesick for Eden. We spend our lives chasing peaceful delight, following dead ends or cul-de-sacs in pursuit of home.
  - We know intuitively that we've wandered. What we don't know is how to return.
  - Our lives are largely the story of the often wrong and occasionally right turns we take in our attempts to get home to the only true Happiness that exists-God himself.

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- **WE ANTICIPATE GREATER HAPPINESS THAN LIFE SEEMS TO OFFER.**
- C. S. Lewis called this anticipation *Sehnsucht*, a German word for “yearning.”
  - *Sehnsucht* is used to describe a longing for a far-off country that’s, for now at least, unreachable. Lewis connected the yearning itself and the foretastes of it with the joy that is longed for.
- The things Adam and Eve anticipated in Eden likely exceeded their imaginations, after the Fall, the opposite is true.
- A. W. Tozer wrote,
  - “For whatever else the Fall may have been, it was most certainly a sharp change in man’s relation to his Creator. He . . . destroyed the proper Creator-creature relation in which, unknown to him, his true happiness lay.” Without that understanding of the Fall, we can’t appreciate the gospel’s reinstatement of our lost happiness: “Essentially salvation is the restoration of a right relation between man and his Creator, a bringing back to normal of the Creator-creature relation.”

# Chapter 2: What Does Our Longing for Happiness Reveal About Us?

- **HUMAN HISTORY IS LARGELY THE STORY OF OUR SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS.**
- Yet without the miraculous intervention of God, our default is to choose our imaginary self-sufficiency over dependence on God . . . which requires humility.
- **ONLY A GOD-SIZED GOSPEL CAN ENABLE US TO FIND TRUE HAPPINESS.**
- Satan is aware of a truth we often fail to see: *sin sabotages happiness.*
- According to Spurgeon,
  - “Man was not originally made to mourn; he was made to rejoice. The Garden of Eden was his place of happy abode, and as long as he continued in obedience to God, nothing grew in that Garden that could cause him sorrow.”
- The apostle John, aided by an angel, time-traveled to the New Earth.
  - There he saw “the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life.”
  - He went on to explain what life will be like for those who live in the New Earth:
  - “No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face” (Revelation 22:1-4, NIV).
- **That’s how much God wants us to be happy-He’ll recreate the universe, raise us from the dead, and give back the wonders of Eden multiplied a thousand times over. There we’ll live with him for eternity-ALL BOUGHT AND PAID FOR WITH HIS OWN BLOOD!**

## Chapter 2: What Does Our Longing for Happiness Reveal About Us?

- **THE BIBLE PROMISES EVERLASTING HAPPINESS FOR GOD’S PEOPLE.**
- World peace and universal happiness seem like utopian dreams, but these dreams are not far fetched, because according to God’s Word, utopia once existed and will again.
  - (What is far fetched is believing we are capable of creating this utopia ourselves!)
- Jesus promised his disciples that one day there will be a “renewal of all things” (NIV), which the English Standard Version translates as “the new world” and the Complete Jewish Bible renders as “the regenerated world” (Matthew 19:28).
- Just as we’ll take on our eternal, resurrected bodies, the world itself will be resurrected.
- Peter preached that Christ would not return “until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago” (Acts 3:21).
- The New Century Version translates this as “when all things will be made right again.”

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- Our entire experience on the New Earth will be of happiness far greater than Adam and Eve could have ever imagined!
- The past will be remembered as that temporary period of rebellion when God's creatures turned from him. We'll celebrate endlessly that Jesus entered our history to redeem us and to restore the shared happiness of God and his people.
- As God's children, we have a history of his faithfulness in the past and an assurance of a secure future, which should define how we view our present.
- This perspective can infuse us with happiness even in what would otherwise be the unhappiest times of our lives.
  - “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18, NIV).

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- **THERE'S NO TRUE HAPPINESS WITHOUT GOD.**
- Charles Darwin, near the end of his life, spoke of what he called his “loss of happiness”.
- Darwin may not have traced his diminished happiness to his gradual change in worldview, but it's likely that the naturalistic perspective he embraced gradually undermined his early delight in studying God's creation, resulting in a joyless, machinelike indifference.
- Loving nature and beauty should indeed be enhanced by loving the God who made them and reveals himself in them-how could it be otherwise?
- For the present, by God's grace and kindness, people can reject God but still receive the benefits of his common grace, including the enjoyment of loving relationships, natural and artistic beauty, and pleasure. However, we live on borrowed time.
- After the termination of this life, we can have one of two combinations:
  - Both God and happiness
  - Neither God nor happiness
- **What we won't be able to have is God without happiness or happiness without God.**