

Series: *Growthology*—*Breaking Through Patterns of Predictability in Your Life*

Message Title: Happiness is a Choice

Date: Thursday, Feb. 23, 2017

Event: Men's Forum

Scripture: Philippians 4:4

Speaker: David H. McKinley

Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

Introduction of a new word: *Growthology*

Growthology: "A study in personal growth toward maturity for men." (If you make up your own words, you get to write your own definitions!)

"As long as you live, keep learning how to live." —Latin Proverb

How many of you would say, "The one thing I want in life is to be unhappy. Misery is my life mission."?

While few would say it is their life mission or ambition to be unhappy or miserable, I have met and known many chronically unhappy people! Looking at some right now?

“Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” —Abraham Lincoln

Today, I want to take you beyond the first lesson in Growthology (*Why You Can't Fake It Till You Make It!* on the subject of honesty) and speak on the subject, *Happiness is a Choice*.

The New Testament book of Philippians repeats the themes of *joy* and *rejoicing*.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice” (Philippians 4:4 ESV).

“... if you have a nice little category for ‘joy is what Christians have’ and ‘happiness is what the world has,’ you can scrap those when you go to the Bible, because the Bible is indiscriminate in its uses of the language of happiness and joy and contentment and satisfaction.” —John Piper

Let's take a quick look: There is a lot of joy (happiness) in the Bible!

- Psalm 16:11
- Psalm 37:3-4
- Psalm 40:16
- Psalm 100:1-2
- Matthew 5 Beatitudes (Blessed = Happy!)
(1611 King James)
- Act 2:46—Not somber gatherings, but joy-filled celebrations
- Revelation 21:4; 22:3—The curse is the trip-wire of happiness

God's ONLY limitation for us is seeking happiness in our world and ourselves apart from Him—outside of His plan and provision for us.

Seeking happiness in the Lord is both good and great! Yet so many of us spend our lives pouting like children—pitching fits, stomping our feet, wearing a scowl, acting all neglected by those who are supposed to love and care for us.

Men, today I want to talk to you about something that many will neglect, omit and overlook when discussing growth—it is time to "Grow Up" and it is time to "Get Happy!"



1. True Happiness is the Design of God For Your Heart

I recently came across a great little book, *God's Promise of Happiness*, by Randy Alcorn, a solid and trusted author. He pointed out that there are more than 2,700 passages of Scripture containing words like joy, gladness, cheer, pleasure, delight, feasting, happiness, exultation, and more. Randy Alcorn also included some very interesting quotes I want to share with you today:

“Every man, whatsoever his condition, desires to be happy.” —Augustine

“All men seek happiness. This is without exception... this is the motive of every action of every man, even those who hang themselves.” —Blaise Pascal

“It is as natural for the reasonable creature to desire to be happy as it is for the fire to burn.” —Puritan Thomas Manton

“All men hunger and thirst after happiness.”
—J.C. Ryle

The heart is far more than a blood pumping mechanism; it is the source of life and all of its fullness!

“All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast” (Proverbs 15:15 ESV).

“A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” (Proverbs 17:22 ESV).

Sadly, most people think happiness and holiness are contradictory pursuits in life.

“‘Being holy is something we do in God’s presence and being happy is something we have to do behind God’s back!’ NOT!... It’s not just okay to be happy; it’s right to be happy.” —Randy Alcorn

Christians have tended to say our focus is not on happiness but joy, because happiness is based on happenings. But Randy Alcorn goes on to say that in reality through every

word study, happiness and joy are synonyms in biblical languages. He is right!

2. True Happiness Does Not Depend Upon Happenings

“always” —Philippians 4:4

There is one interesting common denominator in research on happiness, and that is that happiness has little to do with the circumstances of people—poverty, education, money, etc.

Most people say, “I’d be happier if... I’ll be happy when....”

The truth about happiness and its secret is this: Happiness has to do with your heart! It’s not what is happening *to* you, but what’s happening *in* you that is most important.

You have no control over your circumstances, but you do have some say in your disposition.

“Happiness is a choice—it has much more to do with your disposition than a destination.”

“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:10-13 ESV).

Contentment. One of the reasons we struggle so in life is that we keep sowing and reaping discontentment.

We are not content *with* all things, but *in* all things. There is much to distract, disturb and disrupt in this world, but our focus is in God’s control and care. Lack of contentment fuels broad disappointment and can lead to depression. As a result, we have an abundance of anxiety, stress and depression in our world.

What cultivates discontentment?

- Covetousness—Envy
- Bitterness
- Selfishness
- Greediness

“When we cultivate contentment, we harvest happiness.”

“In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”
(1 Thessalonians 5:18).

3. True Happiness is Linked to Hope

“The strength of your hope is the secret to your happiness.”

The reason so many are so unhappy is because they have placed their hopes in lesser things. They run out like a car that gets old—they want out!

“Rejoice *in* the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4).

“God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything

else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way... God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing." —C.S. Lewis

The gospel is the good news of God's work to redeem and restore us to Himself.

See 1 Timothy 1:11

"The gospel is also the gospel of happiness. It is called 'the more glorious Gospel of the blessed God' and a more correct translation would be 'the happy God'." —C.H. Spurgeon

Does God's happiness matter? Yes. If not, He would never take pains to care about the eternal happiness of His creatures.

Luke 15—the pouting prodigal and the happy father!

4. True Happiness is Discovered Through Helps

That is, helping others, not just focusing on helping yourself.

See Psalm 100:2.