

Eric Butterworth Speaks

Essay #17
THE WINGS OF LIFE

"Be like the bird that pausing in her flight while on boughs too slight, feels them give way beneath her, and yet sings, knowing that she hath wings." This poetic couplet of Victor Hugo's implies that happiness is composed of the same stuff as the feeling of security. Regardless of her precarious situation, the bird sings because she has something supportive within herself.

Happiness is much more than the ecstasy that follows experiences of success, harmony, health, and peace. True happiness is that spirit that enables one to retain inner peace in spite of troubles around him. It is the wings of life. We have thought of happiness as the result of certain conditions or experiences. And, we expect to be happy when this or that happens. Actually, no one and no thing can make us happy, and yet... anyone or anything can provide an excellent opportunity to release the flow of joy, or to hide it under a bushel. But in every case, we are about as happy as we make up our minds to be, and it has little to do with circumstances.

For most of us, our emotions are geared to react to that which comes and goes, what happens to us, how we are treated. One woman, recently, was unhappy to the point of desperation because someone had mistakenly referred to her as her daughter's grandmother.

Happiness is a talent to be developed. Regardless of experiences, we need to stir up the gift of God within us, to keep alive the spark and spirit of joy. If you find it easy to be glad when things go well, and difficult to be glad when things go badly, then you have never really released your own inner power. You have simply been basking in the reflected light of others. And you might as well know it: if things can make you happy, then the loss or absence of things can make you sad... and probably will do so.

One must create his own sunshine, lift himself by the wings of life within. Thus he will not be dependent for security or happiness on conditions or persons. You may unconsciously feel that it is not only natural to be downcast when you are faced with difficulties but that it is an obligation to feel that way. One woman said, "When the Lord sends me tribulations, it is my duty to tribulate." Of course this is false. And certainly your unhappiness is not going to help things. On the other hand Dr. Clarence Cook Little, an expert in cancer research, says that a person who is unhappy is more likely to develop cancer than one who is leading a happy, satisfactory life.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." How very much unhappiness comes to us because we are fretting over something that has occurred... that cannot be changed. It has come to pass... so let it go... and walk on!

Everyone has within him the potential for joy... and the desire to be happy at all times and in all experiences. Watch the little child... he is naturally radiant and happy. Rarely do you find him to be morose and glum. Actually these are adult qualities. Sometimes it is said to a child who is bubbling with enthusiasm: "Why don't you grow up?" Thus we imply that he should hurry up and outgrow the tendency to be joyous... and settle into being sad and restricted and unhappy. In other words we have accepted as an adult characteristic the tendency to react in gloom in the face of the exigencies of life. This is what Jesus probably meant when he referred to hiding one's lamp under a bushel.

Whatever became of the child in you? Dr. Harris says that everyone should let the child out at least once every day by giving in to the inclination to burst into laughter or song in spontaneous reaction to life. This is why Jesus stressed the importance of becoming as a little child. Let happiness happen... often.

Deep within every person is a happy, joyous creature. It is not something to get, but something to awaken and unfold. The great need is to "open out a way whence the imprisoned splendor may escape."

No matter what we experience or how we feel, we always desire happiness...because it is our rightful expression. Thus, when we affirm, "I am happy, light-hearted and free," these are merely words. We are actually identifying ourselves with that level of consciousness where we are one with the free-flowing joy of Spirit.

You are always happy, light-hearted, and free in the transcendence of you. But it must be released...which means that you must let go of that which has caused you turn down your light of joy and thus experience sadness and depression.

The poet sings, "All things respond to the call of rejoicing, all things gather where life is a song." When you are in the consciousness of rejoicing, you are in the flow of the divine process. You draw the kind of things to you that would normally cause you to react in happiness. However, happiness is not just a response to things and conditions, it is a cause of them. This is an aspect of life that is rarely understood.

Actually, when you are in the consciousness of joy, you project an energy that effects the growth of plants, the temperament of animals, and even the moods of the people you live and work with. The Truth is...we dwell in a world of rhythm and harmony which is limitless in potential. Man has this limitlessness within him as a depth potential to be discovered and released. When we are happy we are in tune, in the flow of this rhythm. Whatever be the nature of things, a very good piece of advice is, "Just be glad"...rejoice, give thanks, and sing." This may sound "Pollyanna-ish", but it is the wisest use of the mind. Just be sure that you do not give anyone or anything the power to turn off your inner radiance. Let your light shine...all the time!

All of us, at times, tend to get caught up in gloom and pessimism. Many persons find it quite difficult to get the lights turned on...especially the first thing in the morning. Elbert Hubbard used to advise, "Be pleasant until ten o'clock in the morning and the rest of the day will take care of itself." Thoreau habitually treated himself to some good news first thing in the morning. He would tell himself, for example, how lucky he was to have been born. For if he had not been born he would never have known the crunch of snow underfoot or the glint of starlight. Thus he commenced every day with joy and thanksgiving.

A favorite quotation from Psalm 40 is this: "I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined to me and heard my cry; He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay. He set my feet on a rock and established my goings, and He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." Every morning of your life acknowledge that it is God's new day and you have been inspired with new strength, new ideas, and with a new song...which, like all new songs, is nothing until it is sung. "God has put a new song in my heart and I sing with joy!" It is a good affirmation. Affirm it...instead of "harping on the same old tune."

Remember when the disciples had caught no fish and Jesus told them to cast the net on the other side of the boat...and they caught a huge draught of fishes. Success was on the other side. How far to your own happiness? Just one step toward God, one change of thought, one attitude of giving way to the flow of joy

Make the commitment right now that you are going to cast the net on the other side of the boat, change your attitude, get into the flow of the creative process...which will bubble forth in you as spontaneous joy. Sing the new song of joy...and sing it often. Remember it does not await some happy turn of events, but a turn of consciousness into the flow of joy which will influence all events. Happiness is not a conquest but a release of your inner potential.

Every day of your life, and often through the day, prime yourself with joy by assuming the attitude and posture of joy. Smile as if you had heard good news. Let life happen...and be happy about it. Do not resist what cannot be changed, accept it with serenity. Be everlastingly busy releasing your limitless joy potential.