

Should I Pursue Happiness?

Generations of Americans (Christians included) have lived with the concept and belief that they are entitled to “certain unalienable rights,” including “the pursuit of happiness.” After all, the revered Declaration of Independence of the United States of America contains this lengthy statement: “*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*”

However, nowhere in Scripture do I find that happiness, or even its pursuit, is a divinely-endowed right. The pursuit of happiness itself just isn't a scriptural goal for anyone. Exactly what am I supposed to be pursuing? What is happiness, anyway? What is it that will bring me happiness?

If I am to *pursue* happiness, then it might be something outside of myself, or at least beyond myself. Do I go looking for it? Maybe I look for circumstances that I think will bring me this thing called happiness. But does my happiness depend on things and situations? If it does, then I will never be happy, because life is rarely all that I'd like it to be.

According to the Bible, I gain happiness by what I think, say and do; by my godly attitude and disposition, by who I am.

Someone has said that you don't find happiness looking for it; you stumble across it on the road of service. Happiness is something that happens to you as you live unselfishly for God and for others. Happiness is not a given; you have to earn it.

Here are a couple *biblical* indicators:

“Happy is he who is kind to the needy” (Proverbs 14:21).

After Jesus showed his apostles how they should *humble* themselves and *serve* one another, he said to them; “Now that you know these things, you will be happy if you do them” (John 13:17). In other words, *we don't go looking for happiness; happiness comes to us as a result of the good we do.*

Apostle Paul suffered a lot for his faith and for his faithful service. But he always had the joy of the Lord. The joy of the Lord does not depend on external situations and conditions. The joy of the Lord doesn't depend on material things. The joy of the Lord depends on the Lord. Joy is a personality trait of the Holy Spirit.

The joy of the Lord is already in you because the Lord is in you. But it needs to be released. God *expects* us to demonstrate his joy. It's our duty. The joy of the Lord is a delectable taste of heaven. Nothing human compares with it. Apostle Peter (1 Peter 1:8) says the joy of the Lord cannot be put into words. It's hard to define or describe, but it can be experienced and it can be demonstrated.

Apostle Paul writes from a prison in Rome to the believers in Philippi: He says: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4). He was full of the joy of the Lord while bound by chains and living in a dingy dungeon. Many people are miserable even as they live in the lap of luxury. Many don't enjoy their affluence and many of these people even commit suicide.

We don't need to settle for momentary fun or even for short-lived human happiness, when we can experience the continuous, endless joy of the Lord. ◇◇