

“HAPPINESS”

Preface

I have two partial definitions of heritage, which I have chosen to use to put thoughts into minds as we begin this study.

HERITAGE: Something that one receives
or is entitled to receive by succession,
and/or
an inherited or established way of
thinking, feeling or doing.

The latter part of the definition is what I want to emphasize. I want to create a desire in hearts and motivate (really, that is what motivation is) as we enter this study of the chosen subject, “HAPPINESS.”

This writing has met a need of my heart in many ways. In doing so it also created a desire in my heart to share it with others. There is a basic problem in editing a supplementary reading, and that is to define what one seeks to achieve and how one seeks to do it.

The editing of this study writing was guided by the principals of the Holy Word which touched my heart through the patient study and teachings of many wonderful and faithful Saints, beginning first with my precious wife. Their efforts of love, knowledge of the Word, and perseverance became an inherited and established way of thinking in my heart of life motivated me to want and to do the same for others.

The nature and importance of the subject of this study should be for genuine love and rightly made a part of all people’s life for the good. It must be active and in the life of Christians. It’s an ingredient when active in the Christian’s heart will cause it to be a part of the light that is not hidden under a bushel. It will be shining and reflecting to show or help show others the rewards of joy, peace and happiness.

God bless us all with happiness in doing His Will to His Glory by serving Him in serving others in Jesus’ name I pray. AMEN!

Bill Richardson

Hartselle, AL 35640-4244

HAPPINESS!

By: Bill Richardson Edited by: Fay Camp

It came about so very innocently and unprovoked. And yet it turned out to be of great benefit to me. I now have a devoted appreciation for the meaning of happiness and I learned through study, a much deeper and fuller and more significant meaning of happiness. In my study, which included an extended survey, I discovered what I thought to be many diverse elements of the nature of happiness. The realization of the many elements working together to satisfy the mind or heart and causing or creating happiness was classified, in my mind, a great find. You just have to accept the Biblical Proverb, "As we think in our heart (mind), so are we." I have concluded also, if there are any resulting benefits this find or knowledge must be permitted to have place in one's life.

I want to tell you how my study of happiness came about, what the results were and some or most of my finds. I want to tell of my learned benefits and how it has helped me. My hope and prayer is that it can benefit others and I want also to philosophy, just a bit.

Once upon a time our immediate family, my wife Bobbie and I, our four children and their spouses, and seven grandchildren, a total of sixteen, enjoyed a family gathering on a cold day in December. Our gathering was in the Atlanta area of the state of Georgia. It was well planned and organized, even down to the menu, which included north Alabama BAR-B-Q. Everything was good and as the saying goes, the rest is history. The weather was cold but we tolerated it and kept warm by love which surrounded all of us.

While everything was so great and wonderful, what made it so much the better was because we were all together in one place at the same time. An occasion, for whatever reason, happens not too often. There were sixteen happy hearts at that gathering. You know, I can't help but believe that this writer was the happiest one man alive that day. We took pictures in groups of every combination we could come up with and, of course, we had a picture with all of us in one take.

My heart dictated that there must be an account of our gathering. It should be a written account and be in a booklet format. Giving more thought to the written account, I considered challenging each one of the family members to write a story of sorts and tell of their life for the passing year. I determined to challenge each member on an individual basis, youngest to the oldest, and the age range is from young to older. Of course, this writer is the upper age bracket, oldest that is, all by himself.

The more I thought about it, the more the project affected my heart, and that too was good. All I could envision was....it will be great! Another thought came into mind, and that's when the "Happiness Project" jumped up and found place in my heart. Don't get me wrong. Happiness has been a part of my emotional nature all my life. And that's not to say that I have not experienced unhappiness. But that's another state of mind which I think needs detailed study and analysis. That day at the gathering I did much watching and thinking. I could see happiness in all the hearts of my family members. It could be felt and it was proven evident by the actions displayed by everyone present. It was great, and that's when a rewarding thought came to me.

After our family gathering, Bobbie and I returned to our home, as did all the others, and thus began to plan our carrying-on for another year which was fast approaching. The first thing I did was write a family letter, addressing it to each family member, from the youngest to the oldest. I requested from them, in addition to the story of their present year events, to complete the following statement:

“Happiness is: ____ (To be filled in by the participants, what happiness is to them)

I requested each family member to submit as a minimum five each completed statements, and that there was no maximum.

My thoughts then were, why not solicit members of the Church. So I did! But it did not stop there. I put my mind to work and putting down some verbs and descriptive adjectives I tried answering or completing the statement, “Happiness is....” It was then that I really began thinking what happiness is all about. I was thinking, this is deep, it’s challenging, and it requires more than just a passing through. I then realized what I had asked of those whom I had solicited to complete the statement, “Happiness is.” My thought process was continuing to expand. I began saying to myself, you need to do some concentrated thinking and study about this. If you put it into a question it comes out two questions, and they both ask the same thing. “What is happiness?” or “Happiness is what?” Then I really began to think about those three little-ole-words. And I realized that they were not just three little-ole-words anymore. The result of my thinking was more questions. Naturally, I’m thinking about happiness as it relates to Biblical and spiritual relations with God and with others on a personal basis. All of which has to do with life and what we do in life here and life in the hereafter. Hey! This is big, it’s great, it’s interesting, it’s challenging, and it’s worthy of pursuit and doing it the right way in order to gain the reward which will result if done right.

In my concentrated thinking I concluded that in identifying or defining anything (and certainly this is true of emotions), there are characteristics which more than anything permits us to recognize what anything or everything is. Word definition and association, in my thinking would be the better way to do it. Please think about this, “Words have meanings and leave impressions.” This is the way of explaining or defining happiness. I don’t think you could use charts or graphs to do it— do you?

Words which are used characterize, define or give purpose to an object or an emotion may require explaining or give the meaning of the words used. It may require also selecting associated words which are chosen to be used. You can not define or explain a word with just another word. I’m finding it difficult to say here just what I want to say, but, please don’t forsake me, stay with me and I know we can learn from this study!

I will list, for our learning; associated words which need to be used or for thought given purpose of defining or explaining in part, what the subject happiness is. For the most part, the words which I choose or reference here are words used in the Bible. Many words have an associated word that means the same or nearly the same. Synonyms are important in usage for explaining or defining. Synonymous words make or add colorful meaning to our vocabulary. This is very true in defining and discussing happiness.

If one is happy, how does one know, and how could one describe the happiness within his or her heart? Happy or happiness is characterized by emotional expression. It is shown or felt; i.e., pleasure, joy and/or gladness. An inanimate object can not have or does not have or display feelings or emotion. Of course, you know that. Checking my concordance, I noted that each of the synonymous words, pleasure, joy, and gladness are used in the Bible many more times to admonish us than is happiness. It is incumbent upon us that our happiness be characterized by pleasure, joy, and gladness, which is proper and well pleasing and glorifying to God. Ecclesiastes 3:1 admonishes us, *"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven."*

There is no doubt in my heart but that we are privileged to have and rightly enjoy any and all attributes of happiness. I once read what someone wrote, "Be careful what you wish for, your wish may be granted." I think we must be very careful in seeking happiness. The happiness we desire to enjoy must be made of the right ingredients. This is serious!

James 5:11, *"Behold, we count them happy which endure....."* We will suffer adversity, but endurance has its reward—happiness! Proverbs 16:20, *"....and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he."* Happiness is, trusting in the Lord. There's wise counsel from Job 5:17, *"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."* What.....is.....happiness?

Happiness is: Being corrected by God. We should be happy when corrected by God. Correcting our ways and getting back to the right relationship with God is right. That's where we should be, and thus, cause to be happy. Do we give this proper thought?

Psalms 146:5, *"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God."* There is great comfort, and happiness, in knowing that we have God as our helper and our hope. If that isn't happiness the ocean is dry!

Remember, it has already been said that happiness comes to us as the result of many and varied happenings and situations which come into our life. And that happiness is characterized by emotional expression, one of which is joy. Yes, even great joy, is spoken of in the Bible. That causes one to conclude that great joy must be a notch or so above just joy:

Happiness is, *"Being filled with all joy and peace in believing....."* (Romans 15:31).

Happiness is, *"....."Knowing the joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth...."* (Luke 15:7).

Happiness is, Praising God, being glad and singing for joy. (Psalms 67:3-4)

Psalms 126:5, *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."*

Psalms 128:2, *"....Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."*

The above are but a few biblical references to joy as it relates to happiness. Joy and happiness are synonymous to or of each other. I can't imagine one experiencing (being blessed) by happiness without the other, joy. Can you? This I think is true of so many other words which are what I'm calling akin words. I looked in my limited dictionary & Thesaurus and I found sixteen synonymous words to joy. In the same search, I found thirteen synonymous words to happy. The numbers quoted do not include the adjective form of either word. It is true that each word's synonym listing included many of the same synonyms.

So what this is all about is that each word is characterized by some, or if not most, of the same feeling. You look at each word, happy and joy, their meaning, and ponder the associated synonyms and tell me, oh! I want to be blessed with much joy and happiness. What is so wonderful about it is... WE CAN!

Here's another good word, "glad." It is another attribute of happiness. It's used extensively in the Holy Word. One good definition to reflect glad is, "Feeling of joy, pleasure, content-(meant), and gratefulness." It does seem that these feelings are ingredients of happiness. How gratifying if we can truly know and show gladness in our heart for the blessings which we receive daily. Note our blessing as said in Psalms 9:1-2, showing forth what our attitude and thinking should be. (1) *"I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works."* (2) *"I will sing and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High."*

Happiness is, "glad rejoicing, singing and praising God."

Happiness is generated within our emotion and released or characterized by pleasurable feeling. It seems that would be a great way, yea the right way to go! I submit, "That is His Way." And His way is the best way to go....don't you think? Yes!

In analyzing happiness through word association, synonyms, and word meanings, it brings to mind a point or thought which has given me challenge and concern. Also it has brought a question to mind with which I am struggling. This came about when reviewing synonymous words and their definitions. If happiness is generated within our emotion and released by feelings, and I believe that it is—should we become contented and satisfied?

There could be danger against which we must guard. It hurts to think about it, but it's true. Why is it true? Well, we could be involved in generating our happiness to the degree of contentment and satisfaction by being involved in the wrong thing. Remember, the Holy Word warns us, *"There is pleasure in sin, for a season,"* (Hebrews 11:25) thus, trouble with devastating results. Happiness with pleasure enjoyed by one when playing in the wrong and gratification in worldliness is sin. Sin is transgression of Divine Law and thus, if guilty, one is condemned.

I'm convicted that the happiness emotion is great enough to bring satisfaction to us. It is in our God given nature. To help further understand and appreciate our subject, "Happiness", I am including for benefit of ready reference a limited list of synonymous words with the dictionary definition to some of them:

Happy, (Syn): Gay; Joyous; Cheerful; Fortunate;
Glad; Merry; Contented; Satisfied;
Luck; Blessed; Pleased; Opportune; Delighted.

To provide aid to word meaning, I am defining three of happiness synonyms for ready reference and use:

Contented: Satisfied with things as they are.

Satisfy: (1) To supply fully with what is desired, expected, or needed; gratify.

(2) To free from doubt or anxiety; convince.

Gratify: (1) To give pleasure or satisfaction to.

(2) To satisfy, humor, or indulge.

Joy, (Syn): Pleasure; Glee; Bliss; Elation; Mirth; Felicity; Rapture;
Delight; Transports; Exultation; Gladness; Happiness;
Ecstasy; Festivity; Satisfaction; Merriment.

Here are some more words defined to provide a ready reference for us:

Pleasure: Feeling of enjoyment, satisfaction or delight.

Gladness: Showing/bringing of joy and cheerfulness.

Delight: That which gives extreme pleasure. To please or gratify highly.

Here is a "Recipe for Happiness" which someone gave to me that he or she had copied. I think that it is very timely for this study. I hope you enjoy it and even pass it on.

Take two heaping cups of patience
One heart full of love
Two hands full of generosity
Dash of laughter
One head full of understanding
Sprinkle generosity and kindness
Add plenty of faith and mix well
Spread over a period of a lifetime
Serve to everyone you meet.

Is there any doubt that we must be sure when we are involved in seeking to satisfy our happiness and joy emotions that we are looking in the right places and doing the right acts to consummate the reward?

What I have said and tried to explain above is a promise kept as set forth in paragraph two of page one. More could be said and explained differently....or even more completely and thoroughly, but what I have said in the paragraphs of this writing are the dictates of my heart. It has been very rewarding to me and I have learned much. What has been said has been monitored by the Holy Word. It gave my mind new and revived exercise, which by the way, was needed. It did me good. My continued prayer is this: If you do read and study these thoughts it will help. Also, I am convinced that your life will grow in love and happiness, rewarding you to have a greater appreciation for all the attributes which develop in growing faith, hope and love in the life of a child of God. In my opinion, it's another great way of self motivation. It will create a desire within you to do....to do the will of God. What do you think? Again, please consider, it will work!

There is no doubt in my heart that all the attributes of faith, hope and love are the results of God's grace. However, that's not to say there is no responsibility on (man's) part. We are accountable to God. We are accountable to God whether or not we accept that truth. Being accountable, accepting our responsibility in acts of love result in a life of peace, joy, and happiness. And that's not to say we won't have our cross to bear. Bearing our cross for Him is what brings joy, peace, and happiness to our lives. Enjoy happiness! It's God given.

Here I need to explain the rest of this study. The remaining part of this writing is the "Happiness Is" sayings, which are the results of my limited survey. But first, I want to make a request of you as you read the sayings. As you read the sayings, read them very slowly. Even better, read them aloud and methodologically analyzing what is said. Also

let your heart be receptive to what is said. They will serve your heart and your mind, and that's good. But also remember, you may be reading some designated expressions which you submitted. It may be that the saying can have more than one good meaning and or cause one or more good thoughts. I am sure there is good and rewarding benefit, which will come to us from this method of study.

Please note that I have underlined certain words in some of the Happiness" statements. I did so for emphasis. It may be that you would choose another word to emphasize. Feel free to do so...it is your choice and or pleasure to do so!

"Happiness Is"

Happiness is: Being in God's presence.

Happiness is: Associating with individuals whose goal in life is to get to Heaven.

Happiness is: Doing for others

Happiness is: When you know you are walking hand in hand with God.

Happiness is: Contentment according to God's word.

Happiness is: Growing to be more Christlike.

Happiness is: Knowing God is in control of everything!

Happiness is: Having my entire family be faithful Christians.

Happiness is: Knowing that I am trying to teach others about Jesus so they can go to Heaven. Also knowing my actions and example do not hurt the Lord's Church and my influence has not been compromised.

Happiness is: Sharing good times and bad times with a loving spouse.

Happiness is: Having the right attitude even when circumstances are bad.

Happiness is: Being able to be married to the same good wife for over 50 years.

Happiness is: The blessed assurance of having a home in Heaven some day.

Happiness is: Enjoying seeing God's work in other's life.

Happiness is: Counting my many blessings.

Happiness is: Not letting circumstances steal my happiness.

Happiness is: Knowing that your influences have been a factor in the lives of others, and that will help them to prepare for eternity.

Happiness is: Spending time with happy people, and doing for others it has great rewards.

Happiness is: Using God's beautiful gifts. Serving others according to their needs.

Happiness is: Feeling at peace about my salvation.

Happiness is: Being loved and accepted with all your faults.

Happiness is: Knowing that if I do not leave God deliberately He will not leave me, no matter what happens. If I die suddenly I am trying to be prepared.

Happiness is: Spiritual peace!

Happiness is: Knowing that God has cleansed you of your sins.

Happiness is: To see the church grow.

Happiness is: Being able to provide for ones family in an acceptable way.

Happiness is: Knowing Jesus as my Lord and Savior and having a close relationship with my Heavenly Father.

Happiness is: Taking walks with my wife.

Happiness is: Being with family and friends.

Happiness is: Enjoying the beauty of God's Creation.

Happiness is: Giving my cares to the Lord.

Happiness is: Knowing that on Judgment Day we have the opportunity to go to a better place if we are found faithful to our God.

Happiness is: Hugs and kisses from grandchildren.

Happiness is: Having the rich heritage of a Christian Family.

Happiness is: Sharing daily activities with my husband.

Happiness is: Having your children obey you with a respectful attitude even when they don't agree with your decision.

Happiness is: Working hard and sleeping well.

Happiness is: Walking with God. Serving others. Having a Christian family.

Happiness is: Being able to do things for others.

Happiness is: Having friends who believe in and are obedient to God.

Happiness is: Knowing Jesus is my Lord and Savior.

Happiness is: Knowing I am trying to teach others about Jesus so they too can go to Heaven.

Happiness is: Enjoying God's work in my life.

Happiness is: Being a member of the Lord's church.

Happiness is: A manifestation of inward peace.

Happiness is: Remembering my wonderful Christian parents who wanted the best for me and my family.

Happiness is: Peace, happiness and contentment of the individuals I am associated with and closest to. Not being set on "stuff".

Happiness is: Being able to do God's will by helping others

Happiness is: A Christian, loving family, good health. * underline all three!

Happiness is: Being safe and secure in Jesus Christ.

Happiness is: Enjoying my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Happiness is: Seeing what you've tried to teach your children (all their lives) pay-off.

Happiness is: Hearing your children say, "I love you".

Happiness is: A good Bible study.

Happiness is: Having peace and harmony within your family, and the families of your siblings.

Happiness is: Having the Bible available to study and having good eyes to read and study so that I am a Christian.

Happiness is: To have faith in God.

Happiness is: A family who loves one another and is obedient to God's word.

Happiness is: Helping folks, being needed.

Happiness is: Partaking in the Lord's Supper and knowing my soul is safe no matter what difficulties life brings because of God's great love for me in giving Jesus to die for me. Heaven awaits me!

Happiness is: Enjoying God's work on my life.

Happiness is: Coming home from a long trip while away from my family.

Happiness is: Listening to the birds sing and knowing God is in control!

Happiness is: Being with relatives, friends at church and other gatherings.

Happiness is: Using God's beautiful gifts.

Happiness is: Sharing genuine lasting friendship with most special people.

Happiness is: The physical comforts of living in the U.S.A. and material blessings to meet my needs and also give to others.

Happiness is: Being able to worship God without interference from others.

Happiness is: Being with Christian friends.

Happiness is: Being mindful of the need of others.

Happiness is: Being around good moral people.

Happiness is: Being able to provide for ones family in an acceptable way.

Happiness is: To watch your kids and grand kids grow up to be Christians.

Happiness is: Having good health (at my age in life) so that I am able to take care of my personal needs, even while living alone.

Happiness is: Being able to have a garden.

Happiness is: Realizing and understanding the blessings of being "in the Lord".

Happiness is: Spending fellowship time with those you love.

Happiness is: Singing praises to the Lord! Amen!

Happiness is: Doing a good job.

Happiness is: Rearing a child in the Church and seeing them rearing their family in the church.

Happiness is: Having good health and being able to help others.

Happiness is: To wake up and see the sunshine, the beauty of God given nature, which He has truly blessed us all with.

Happiness is: My association with Christian friends

Happiness is: Getting a telephone call from someone who is asking, "Can you help me"?

Happiness is: God is good to me... I am Happy!

Happiness is: Taking walks with my wife.

Happiness is: Having my child who is a Christian.

A thought of this writer: As I see it, most of the expressions above can be classified ingredients of happiness. How many do you suppose we could come up with? How would today's list compare with the list of Israel, more, less, or the same? Should today's list be the greater, when would we think the growth (or change) started? Would the difference, if any, be because of needs, wants, or both? By the way, "Needs and Wants" was the title of one of my study writings and it was made available back in October 2006. If you did not get a copy there are copies still available(on my Web) too!

It is my hope that you enjoyed this account and study of happiness. It was a thing of my heart and I had to share it with you. Better and more and in thanksgiving is my hope and prayer that I acknowledge the rewards and blessings of the consecrated knowledge of what the scriptures say as regard to happiness. It was a blessing to do this study with you and I hope you received blessings for having studied with me on the great attribute, **'HAPPINESS'**.

Happiness truly is a CHOICE. IT IS A MIND THING! How many times have I said that? Don't answer, however you may, if you know, but truly, it is a mind thing! What does the Proverb say about our thinking? "As we think, so are we"!

I must tell you....I love you! I tell you also, I am looking forward to our next study together on another great, consecrated attribute. There will be more, if God grants me days. That is a promise I make to you one and all...AMEN!

I beseech His strength for our faith that we live in accordance to His Will and that happiness will abound in our lives. To God be the glory! AMEN!

Bill Richardson
Member, Hartselle Church of Christ
Hartselle, Alabama

Please help me advertise my Website—here it is!

My Website, www.geocities.com/dubbyt, has a link to: www.hartsellechurch.org, which is the Hartselle Church of Christ, Hartselle, AL, a link to, www.austinvillecoc.org which is the Website of Austinville Church of Christ, Decatur, AL, and a link to www.northcobbchurch.org, which is the Church of Christ at North Cobb, Kennesaw, GA. Please visit each Websites, you will be blessed.

P.S.: Remember this is a repeat exercise. It can be serious fun with SPIRITUAL rewards and will give your heart a good work-out. Please give it a great big, "I'll do it", then do-it and feel good about it!