

Choosing to Be Happy

The Gracious Woman of God, Part 3

I. Set Point Theory. Abraham Lincoln said, “**Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.**” (Humes, 1996, p. 18). When I read that quote some years ago, I was perplexed. Don’t we have a right to grieve terrible circumstances, I wondered. Yet research has shown that Abraham Lincoln was right.

For example, David T. Lykken, a behavioral geneticist at the University of Minnesota, has presented evidence that our sense of happiness is half determined by our DNA, and half by our environment. In other words, we may be born with a particular genetic “set point” of happiness, but our circumstances may influence us just as strongly as our genetic background.

Lykken said that people tend to return to their happiness “set point.” We may win the lottery—or we may lose a leg. But three to six months after these occurrences, we will be just about as happy as we were before.

Lykken also observed **that while people have a natural set point of happiness, they can transcend that point by doing things they enjoy, and choosing to be happy—even cheerful.**

But is this scriptural? What does the Bible say about happiness?

II. What the Bible Says About Happiness.

God wants us to be happy, He wants us to be prosperous and in good health.

Jesus told us that it is our Father’s pleasure to give us the Kingdom,
Luke 12:32 [Jesus said,] *“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”*

David spoke of God’s pleasure in seeing him well—and more,
Psalm 35:27 *Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; And let them say continually, “Let the Lord be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.”*

In this passage, the word “prosperity” is actually the word “**shalom**,” [shah-LOAM] which according to Strong’s Concordance means well, happy, friendly, healthy, prosperous, peaceful, restful and safe. It is God’s desire—His pleasure—to see us well, happy, friendly, prosperous, peaceful, restful and safe!

John wrote to the church,
3 John 1:2 *Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.*

God desires our souls to prosper—and He also wants us to prosper and be in good health in every way.

Pastor Diana Clancy, Kingdom Life Fellowship, Lubbock, Texas, May 7, 2013
Unless otherwise stated, all scripture is from The New King James Bible (NKJV)

Paul said that in spite of circumstances, he had learned to be content in all things, Philippians 4:11 ... ***I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.*** [NAS]

Here is a truth Paul we can all learn from Paul, 1 Timothy 6:6 ... ***godliness with contentment is great gain.*** [NKJV]

Being content is great wealth! How many people do you know who seemingly have everything—yet are unhappy, discontent, even miserable? Far better to have little with contentment, then to have the world's riches with misery!

Proverbs 15:17 *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred.* [NKJV]

We can gain this contentment—and to be content in every circumstance. We can have the dinner of herbs that comes with love, and treasure it, and be grateful and happy.

Here is an exercise I've found that increases my happiness every time: take a few moments to thank the Lord for every part of your life, your home, your family, your circumstances. Thank Him, praise Him. There, now aren't you happier?

Scripture also tells us that our joy in the Lord is our strength, Nehemiah 8:10 *Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."* [NIV]

The healthful effect of cheerfulness is observed in Proverbs, Proverbs 17:22 ***A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.***

Have you ever been around a person who had a cheerful heart? Weren't they just so much fun to be with? And did you notice that their attitude was catching? After being around them for a while, you were smiling too—and there was something in you that was drawn to them.

An example in my own life is an acquaintance who I will call "Marilyn." Marilyn is known in our city as a patroness of the Arts—and as one of the happiest, most cheerful people one could ever hope to meet. She radiates happiness. When she enters a room, you know she is there by her laughter. When you meet her, she always has something good to say about you personally, something that builds you up in some way. Marilyn has a following, too—musicians, singers, artists, wait staff, servers, restaurateurs—all know Marilyn and love her—and go out of their way to please her. No one can do enough for Marilyn!

And yet what few people realize is that Marilyn has come through much adversity. She lost a sweet young son to leukemia. Years later, even while she laughed, she was in much pain, and underwent knee replacement surgery in both knees. Marilyn has known bad times, but she is vibrant and smiling. Can we all be more like her?

I am convinced that we can choose to be happy—and I believe that scripture tells us how. Here, for example is the “mental health” scripture of the bible,

Philippians 4:8 *Finally brethren, whatever things are **true**, whatever things are **noble**, whatever things are **just**, whatever things are **pure**, whatever things are **lovely**, whatever things are of **good report**, if there is any **virtue** and if there is anything **praiseworthy—meditate on these things.***

Paul tells us to meditate on the good things! Think about the good things, review them, dwell on them. Here is a truth I can attest from my own life,

>>>If you can control your thoughts, you can control your emotions.

When I was very ill with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, I found the depths of this truth. Paul was right. **If you dwell on positive things, positive emotions follow.** Positive thoughts become positive emotions, even a feeling of well-being.

Paul also counseled that if there is anything we are anxious about, then we need to give these things to the Lord,

Philippians 4:6 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Here are the steps Paul gives us for getting rid of anxiety,

- 1) Take everything to the Lord in prayer;
- 2) Supplication is a kind of prayer that praises God for His character. So when praying, think about how good God is—and tell Him so.
- 3) Be grateful. Thank God in advance. Just thank Him, for He is so good!

This passage in Philippians 4:6-8 tells us what to think about, and how not to worry. **We can choose happiness—or not—just by what thoughts we allow ourselves to think.**

Finally, the bible also tells us that **happiness is the result of making the right choices.** Happiness follows when we walk with the Lord and obey His word,

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no revelation the people cast off restraint, but **happy is he who keeps the law.***

Proverbs 28:14 ***Happy is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.***

If there is no revelation of God and no reverence for Him—why should anyone adhere to righteousness? **But if we know God, and if we are willing to listen to Him and obey Him, we will make right choices and good choices which will keep us in His way, and which will have good results. We are on the path to happiness. Happiness results from obedience to God, His ways and His word.**

But what happens if we don't love God and obey Him because we love Him, John 14:15? Then we will experience the result of bad choices, YET—God calls us to repent! We have only to repent, and He can lead us to the right way, the good path that is filled with His goodness and truth. John 8:36—whom the Son sets free is free indeed—always follows repentance. Ask God to forgive you, He will, 1 John 1:9. No matter what you have been involved with, or where you came from, He can wash you, sanctify you, and justify you, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, making you His beloved child, pure, holy and undefiled. **2 Corinthians 11:2 follows 1 Corinthians 6:9—impurity becomes holiness. We are washed by His blood!**

III. What Interferes With Our Happiness?

Some years ago, I was at an amusement park in our city with my two younger sons, ages about 9 and 11. I should have been enjoying myself, after all, my dear spouse was with me, and it was a beautiful evening, cool and balmy. Yet I was fretting, and I wasn't happy at all. That old demon of fear I have often battled had shown up, and every time my sons got on an amusement ride, I was fearful that they might get hurt. Suddenly the Lord spoke to me, not so much in words, but in understanding. First, He showed me huge warrior angels around my sons, even as they rode those crazy rides. Then He told me that fear was the opposite of faith. Therefore, fear is a sin. Last He told me to STOP being afraid, because **my fear was actually interfering with the job His angels were doing of protecting my sons! He said when I was fearful, I was actually giving the enemy a legal right to hinder His protection.** I repented immediately. That moment, I chose to trust the Lord. The rest of the evening I truly enjoyed myself.

A spirit of fear is just one example of things that can hinder our happiness. What are some other things? What about unforgiveness? Didn't Jesus tell us that if we don't forgive others we will not be forgiven ourselves, Matthew 6:14-15. Isn't it so much better to forgive and let God handle the other people?

Here is a list of things that can interfere with our happiness—and also suggestions for how to deal with them.

Anger

The bible says, "Be angry, and do not sin," Psalm 4:4. Jesus was angry in the Temple when He drove the businesses and merchants out, Mark 11:15-16. Anger in itself is not sin—it's what we do with anger that can become sin. The problem is our tendency to review anger and let it build, rather than confront it, forgive, and let it go. When anger becomes unforgiveness and bitterness, then it is sin. What should we do about it? Forgive, let it go. Take every anxiety to God, let Him handle it. Realize also there are times when we do need to act on our anger—let God lead you in this. First, be right with God, then let Him lead you in what you should do about a situation. **Act only with His wisdom, always.**

Anxiety

Paul says in Philippians 4:6-7, "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace*

of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.

This is a powerful verse! Take everything you are anxious about to God. Ask Him to handle it, thanking Him for His faithfulness and His goodness to you. **Leave it in His hands, don't snatch it back!** Whenever you think about it again, thank Him that He is handling it, because He is so good, so kind, and so faithful.

Psalm 55:22 Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you. He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Fear

Fear NEVER comes from God. If something is filled with fear, then it is not from God! 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.**"

Realize that fear is actually a demonic spirit. Resist it by first repenting of the sin of fear, and then resisting that spirit of fear out loud in Jesus' name, commanding to GO! Then spend time thanking God for His goodness and mercy toward you, and that He takes care of you, for He is your heavenly Father. Praise Him until you are calm again and can think clearly—and then praise Him some more, for He has given you **love, power and a sound mind.** Thank Him for these!

Negative thoughts

There comes a point in our Christian walk when we realize that we need to take our thoughts captive. Negative thoughts become negative words. Jesus said, "...out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks," Matthew 12:34. We need to control the thoughts! Paul counsels to take our thoughts captive, 2 Corinthians 10:5 *casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.***

Take negative thoughts captive! Challenge them! Deal with them! If they are fear or anxiety, then take them to God in prayer—and resist that spirit of fear. If they are unforgiveness and bitterness, then **choose to forgive, immediately.** Do not allow the enemy any stronghold in your mind or imagination!

Negative words

Negative words are the result of negative thoughts, so deal with these as you would with negative thoughts. The difference is that once thoughts become negative words, we often speak curses and judgments on others. Therefore in addition to repenting for the thoughts and words, we must also break the ungodly judgments and curses we have spoken on others. Do this. Repent for every ungodly word curse and judgment you have spoken. Then break all these ungodly words in the name of Jesus Christ. Do this out loud, because this is warfare. Say something like, "Father, I repent of all the

ungodly curses and judgments I have spoken. Please forgive me and help me change my speech. And right now, in Jesus' name, I break every ungodly curse and judgment I have spoken, whether against myself, my family, or others. I declare in Jesus' name that they are all broken now. Amen."

Unforgiveness

Unforgiveness sneaks up on us like a snake, and then coils around us, trapping us and squeezing out all our joy. Even worse, it bites and fills us with venom, which in the end sickens us and destroys our joy in the Lord. **Choose to forgive!!!!** Realize that if you don't forgive, you will have no power in prayer, Psalm 66:18. If you don't forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive you either, Matthew 6:14-15. If you don't forgive, you will be jailed in a prison of torment—a prison of bitter, negative thoughts, Matthew 18:21-35.

Choose to forgive! Say these for words, "I choose to forgive." Then stop the negative words and thoughts—instead, every time you think of that person or circumstance, use

Four Steps for Forgiving,

- 1) **Say, "I choose to forgive _____ . Father, as You have forgiven me, so I forgive them."** We forgive because Colossians 3:13 says, "*bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*"
- 2) **Pray for them, bless them.** Jesus told us, "*But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.*" Pray for your enemies, and God's love in you for them will follow. Here is a blessing to pray for your worst enemy, Acts 3:26 "*To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.*" **Pray that God will bless those who have hurt you by turning them away from their sins, and turning them to Him instead.** What greater blessing can there be than knowing God?
- 3) Give the WHOLE situation to the Lord, Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:6-7.
- 4) Ask for the blood of Jesus to cover the memories, to heal you and take the pain away. Choose to forgive, and go through these steps—even 490 times, if necessary (Matthew 18:22!). But also PRAY FOR HEALING. Healing comes by the blood of Jesus Christ, always. So pray for God to cover the memories, thoughts, words and circumstances with Jesus' blood, to heal them and take the pain away. Do this as often as necessary. **Eventually you will be able to think about the situation and feel no pain, no hurt and no negative emotion other than sadness for the person or people who hurt you. At that point you have forgiven completely, and you have been healed.**

Wrong choices

We all make wrong choices. Here is our hope, we can ask God to show us anything we are doing or have done that is a wrong choice, or even sin. We can repent, and ask God to cleanse us. **If you ask God to forgive you and cleanse you, He will, 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

One of my favorite bible verses is this, Proverbs 6:23 *“For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”* I want the reproofs of instruction that are the way of life, I want God to correct me! I would far, far rather He correct me here on earth, than face Him in heaven someday and be so sorry for something I did or didn't do. Therefore, I ask Him to search my heart, Psalm 139:23-24 and show me anything I need to change or correct. I do this every day. Realize that if you are willing to allow God to correct you, it only increases the anointing on your life, Psalm 141:5.

I V. Five Steps to Happiness.

Happiness for the Christian is different than that for the unbeliever. Here is the major difference, in the flesh, we were born with a “set point” of happiness, which can be somewhat changed either upwards or downwards by the way we live our lives.

This is not true for the Christian, however, for in Christ we are a new creation, 2 Corinthians 5:17 ***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.***

If we are new in Christ, then don't we have His spiritual DNA? Do we have to be forlorn, unhappy, even grumpy because of our genetic heritage or past experiences? No. **We can choose to be more like Christ.** Becoming more like Christ is a result of first of all, focus on Him. Then, doing the things He asks us to do. Also, rejoicing in Him, being kind to others—and spending time just loving on Him and worshiping Him.

Five Steps to Happiness

1. CHOOSE to focus on Jesus Christ.

Here, I believe, is a great kingdom principle, Hebrews 12:2 *Let us **fix our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* [NIV]

Colossians 3:1-3 *If then you were raised with Christ, **seek those things which are above, where Christ is**, sitting at the right hand of God. **Set your mind on things above**, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Choose to focus on Christ! This will cost you time and require you to change your priorities. But it is worth it! When Christ becomes the center of your life, there is a blessing in your heart and a song in your spirit. Best of all—you become more like Him.

2. CHOOSE to implement His way of living.

Jesus said, *“If you love Me, you will obey what I command,”* John 14:15 [NIV].

Do you love Christ? Then follow Him, John 12:26. Allow Him to correct you, Proverbs 6:23. Ask Him to forgive you, 1 John 1:9, and change you, Romans 12:2. This includes guarding your thoughts and words, and avoiding sin.

Psalm 128:1-2 *Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.*

Isaiah 3:10 *Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.*

Most important, spend time with Him.

>>Spend time in the word of God every day.

>>Spend time praying every day.

>>Spend time meditating on some part of the bible every day.

This is not optional for a Christian, this is our life,

Proverbs 8:34-35 *Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. **For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord.***

3. CHOOSE to rejoice in the Lord.

Philippians 4:4-5 *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! **Let your gentleness [graciousness] be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.***

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give **thanks**; for this is the will in Christ Jesus for you.*

Here is another great kingdom principle. We can choose to rejoice always, in everything. We can pray, and take every care to our Father in heaven. We can be filled with gratitude and thanksgiving in everything (not for everything). And we can also allow the people around us to see that **the Lord is at hand** by our gracious words and actions.

Also, **remember to laugh!** Laughter is contagious, and so is joy! Those who bring joy to others are blessed!

4. CHOOSE to do good things and kind things for others.

There is a scriptural principle that the more you give away, the more will be given back to you,

2 Corinthians 6:6 *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

Conversely, the more you withhold what you should give, the poorer you are,

Proverbs 11:24 *There is one who scatters, yet increases more, and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty.*

These verses are true: Giving leads to increased resources! God is faithful, **God blesses those who bless others, not just financially, but in other ways as well.**

One of the greatest blessings is a sense of happiness that follows those who bless others,

Psalm 84:11 *For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.*

5. CHOOSE to love God—with your words, with your worship, and with your life.

Tell your heavenly Father every day that you love Him. Worship Him. Thank Him. He did so much for us, isn't this the very least we owe Him? Our Father in heaven longs for our love. He is so delighted when we tell Him we love Him.

Then show Him your love by your obedience to His word. You will find that you only fall in love with Him even more—and you will be blessed.

Humes, James C., [The Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln](#), Beckon Books, Nashville, Tennessee, 1996

Lykken, David T., [The Heritability of Happiness](#). *Harvard Mental Health Letter*.
<http://www.psych.umn.edu/psylabs/happness/hapindex.htm>

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Suggestions for Growth.

This week, try taking “Five Steps to Happiness.” Here are practical suggestions,

1. CHOOSE to focus on Jesus Christ.

Greet Him in the morning. Tell Him that you are choosing to follow Him today. Give Him the new day, and ask Him to help you through it. Take every problem to Him. Ask Him for help. Take every good thing that happens to Him. Thank Him for His goodness to you.

2. CHOOSE to implement His way of living.

Spend time with Him—
Pray every day.
Read your bible every day.
Meditate on a scripture every day.
Also, ask Him if there is anything He wants you to change or correct. Listen to Him. Obey Him.

3. CHOOSE to rejoice in the Lord!

“Rejoice in the Lord always,” Philippians 4:4 means precisely that. Look for ways to rejoice, and thank Him for each small thing. Choose to be happy. Choose to focus on the positive things, Philippians 4:8, the good things, and not the bad. Thank Him for them.

Try this-- As you go through the day, look for good things that happen to you. They may be as small as the beauty of a flower, or as large as a child’s arms around your neck hugging you. “Collect” these moments in your memory. At the end of the day, take the time to remember every good moment. Treasure it. Thank God for each one. Collect these moments like bouquets of beautiful flowers, something to enjoy at the end of each day.

4. CHOOSE to do good things and kind things for others.

Ask the Lord to show you how you can bless someone this week, and then do that. Look for ways to be a blessing throughout the week. When you do bless someone, ask, how did that make you feel? Remember that your kind, affirming words to others count as a blessing also!

5. CHOOSE to love God—with your words, with your worship, and with your life.

The psalmist in Psalm 119:164 said, “*Seven times a day I praise You.*” Challenge yourself to praise God seven times every day. Tell Him you love Him. Thank Him for something in your life. Worship Him. Back up your worship of Him with the way you live. Choose to be a blessing to others.