

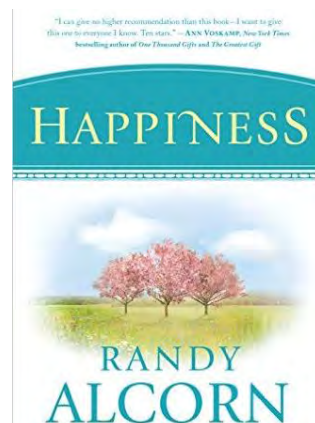


Week One: GLAD GOD

Introduction

To start the series, we are setting the Biblical framework for WHY we, as Christians, should be happy. Then, in the following 3 sessions, we will look at HOW we are to go about being happy.

In recent years, many Christians have struggled to embrace the tension of being happy in the Lord, while living in a world so full of suffering and difficulty. In order to try and make sense of the tension, many (most of us included) have believed and practiced a theology of “Christian misery”, while waiting to experience joy when Christ returns. This week we re-examine what it means for Christians to be happy and why it is a thoroughly Biblical posture to embrace. For those who wish to contemplate this further, we recommend getting yourself a copy of Randy Alcorn’s book “Happiness”. See the picture below:



Sermon Points:

1. God Is Happy

- [Read Zephaniah 3:17](#)

To combat some of the prosperity teaching that has swept through modern-day Christianity, some of our theological circles have focussed primarily on only some of the elements of God’s character, which if viewed in isolation, could portray a God who is less than loving. And though it is entirely correct to expound from scripture on God’s justice, vengeance and wrath towards wickedness, without also expounding and dwelling on some of his other attributes, we are likely to develop an unbalanced theology of fear and misery.

While we intellectually believe that God is loving, gracious, compassionate, merciful, kind and generous etc. many of us seldom live as though we truly believe this at a heart level.



Though we are well aware of the pain that this sinful world brings us, we are seldom aware of the goodness of God, and his desire for our joy. But even more than that, we seldom believe that God absolutely delights in US!!! It just seems like such a foreign thought, and yet it is entirely biblical.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think we overemphasize some of God's characteristics and underemphasize others?
- ❖ Q: Which characteristics most describe God, as you know him? (Do you see God as stricter more than loving, or do you have a more balanced view of his character, and why do you think this is?)
- ❖ Q: When you hear "God wants you to be 'happy'", what is your immediate gut reaction to such a statement? (Do you believe it, or do you immediately get defensive about what that means?)
- ❖ Q: Why does it seem so shocking to us that God would delight in us and even sing over us (see Zephaniah 3:17)?

2. God Has Placed A Desire For Happiness In Us

The desire to be happy is not a sinful desire. It is a human desire, one that we were designed to experience. Sin has distorted the world, and it has damaged all of creation to some extent, so that we are unable to experience happiness in the same way God had designed it to be experienced in the Garden of Eden. So, though we are frustrated in our pursuit of happiness because of sin, and often search in the wrong direction for happiness, the *desire* for happiness is merely part of our design as human beings, and it causes us to seek God.

- ❖ Q: Why is it important for us to realise that the desire to be happy is not sinful?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think many Christians believe that the desire to be happy is wrong?
- ❖ Q: Why does our frustrated pursuit of happiness actually lead us to seek God? (Share your experience of this with one another).

3. God Has Given Us The Greatest Reasons For Happiness

God has given us, as believers, every reason to be happy:

- We are loved
 - We are forgiven
 - We have purpose on earth
 - God is in control
 - We can experience God's presence
 - We have the certainty of heaven
- ❖ Q: Which of the above reasons to be happy do you hold most strongly, and why?
 - ❖ Q: Which of the above reasons to be happy do you most struggle to embrace, and why?
 - ❖ Q: Why is it crucial that the reasons mentioned above are the primary reasons for our happiness in this life?
 - ❖ Q: If someone struggles to feel happy/joyful when contemplating all that God has given them, what would you suggest they do about it? (How does one embrace and experience truth?)



4. God Is The Source And Sustainer Of Our Happiness

Our pursuit of happiness in things other than God will always fall short and disappoint us at some point. God is the only source of any true and lasting happiness, and should be the first place that we go to. Finding happiness in our creator does not negate our present trials and suffering, but it does allow us to have joy in Him, even while things are difficult around us.

- ❖ Q: What are some of the things that you have been chasing in order to be happy? Write them down. (If you are not sure, look at the way in which you spend your time and money, and what you prioritise. These will help you to see what you invest in, hoping for a return.)
- ❖ Q: Why is it impossible for things/people to keep us continually happy?

Personal Reflection and Action:

- ❖ Q: What is God asking me to deal with in light of this week's message?