



Week Four: Happy and Holy

Popular culture says that happiness is a by-product of serving and pleasing oneself. But the Bible says that happiness is the result of living a life of sold-out devotion to Christ. It is counter-intuitive and therefore it is going to take:

1. a firm decision to submit to the truth in scripture,
2. intentionality to align our thoughts and beliefs to what Scripture says,
3. and the commitment to walk them out in obedience

Sermon Points: To experience the delight of devotion we must....

1. Understand the Wonder of Salvation

- Read 2 Peter 1:3-4

The scriptures leave no room for a passive version of Christianity, where we are unable to change or grow, and are then inevitably miserable. Peter tells us that because we are united to Christ, we *have already..*

- ESCAPED the corruption of the world, and the governance of our own sinful desires,
- become PARTAKERS of the divine nature,
- been CALLED to live for the glory and excellence of God,
- and been GIVEN EVERYTHING we need in order to live this out.

Half-hearted obedience and devotion to Christ leaves us with the toils and not the joys of 'religion'. It keeps us fearing God, but not enjoying and loving God, and we lose out on the primary reason for our happiness. As we live straddled between the two worlds, we end up more miserable than anyone else. (Summarised from a John Wesley quote).

- ❖ Q: Why is a passive and half-hearted Christian life incongruent with our beliefs?
- ❖ Q: Why does half-hearted devotion leave us feeling miserable?
- ❖ Q: Why then do we tend to believe that we can continue to live in sin and not reap any consequences, in our own lives or in our relationship with Christ?

[Let's make this practical: take a minute to consider the sinful tendencies you have become passive about putting behind you. Do these things keep you from pursuing Christ wholeheartedly, and delighting in him, in his presence? Consider what happens once you have gossiped about someone, lost your temper, overspent, viewed porn, lied to someone, cheated or anything else.... How do you feel about it later, when you are alone? What does it do to the authenticity of your relationships? What does it do for your ability to be honest and transparent? What does it do to your prayer life and childlike confidence before God? Does it add to your happiness or does it create a disconnect from God, others and a general sense of misery?]

- ❖ Q: Why is it so important for us to believe and trust scripture *first*, and then let it determine our thinking, decisions and behavior, before we experience happiness as the byproduct of a devoted life to Christ?



2. Grow in Knowledge of God

- Read 2 Peter 1:5-9, Psalm, 119:103-105 & Jeremiah 15:16

When we have really considered the magnificence of our own salvation and everything that Christ has secured for us, we then need to respond to that by doing what scripture instructs us to do. Peter says that though we have been given faith, we need to keep knowing more about God, which deepens our relationship with him.

The way we are instructed to do this is through prayer, reading and studying the scriptures, and even fasting. These are known as spiritual disciplines, because they take effort, intention and at times even submission, because we will not always feel like it. Part of the reason we often don't feel like it is because we genuinely believe that these things will not bring us any joy, but rather, we believe that we need to do them out of a sense of duty to God. We instinctively believe that spending the time with God will rob us of the happiness we could derive by spending time doing other things. But when we compare our beliefs to that of the Psalmist or the prophet Jeremiah, we realise that we have some wrong beliefs.

- ❖ Q: Why are spiritual disciplines absolutely necessary in growing our knowledge of God?
- ❖ Q: Why does Peter say that we need to add knowledge to our faith? Why is faith not enough to sustain a devoted life to Christ?
- ❖ Q: Which of the spiritual disciplines do you find the easiest to maintain (if any) and why?
- ❖ Q: If your belief about the importance of spiritual disciplines does not match your behaviour (i.e. you believe that scripture is vital for your relationship with God, but you rarely make time or effort for it), what do you think that means and what should you do about it?

3. Work Hard in the Fight Against Sin

- Read James 1:14-15

Sadly, we continue to believe, at heart-level, that sin is what really brings us happiness. But it is a deception, as it never delivers on its promises, and so we are constantly living with the misery that sin brings into our lives. We are owned by the fight against sin, because we seldom fight back, and the reason we don't fight back, is because either we believe that sin brings us joy, or we believe that we will lose the fight.

We genuinely do not believe Paul, when he says that we have the gift of self-control from the Spirit, and that we *can* put off the old nature. We also doubt Peter when he tells us that we have everything we need in order to win the fight against sin. If we do believe the scriptures, it will be evidenced by some attempts to fight our sin. Take a minute to think about the sin you are currently fighting, fleeing and seeking absolute freedom from. What are you doing to ensure you win the fight, for the sake of your own joy and growth in Christ?



For those of us who struggle to know how to do that, 1 John 1 tells us to do the following:

- acknowledge our sin (be specific),
 - confess it as wrong,
 - believe in the forgiveness of sin, because of Christ's work on the cross – and accept forgiveness for that sin
 - and turn from it and obey God in this area of your life.
- ❖ Q: What is your biggest reason for not turning away from sin?
 - ❖ Q: Why must we actually fight sin?
 - ❖ Q: Why do you think that acknowledging our sin is the first step towards fighting it – and why do you think so many people battle with this first step?

4. Practice Affection and Love for Others

Peter not only wants us to fight sin, but he also wants us to fight for our relationships – and actively show brotherly love and fondness for one another. This often comes at a sacrifice to our own comfort, and requires a conscious level of commitment and consistency to church community. It is not possible to be a thriving Christ follower without other Christ followers (the church).

5. Live as Diligent Citizens of Another Kingdom

- Read 2 Peter 1:10-11

We will never *instinctively* grow in holiness and devotion to Christ. We have to diligently pursue him, and as we do so, he will preserve and keep us until the end, when the fight is finally over. If we just assume that we will drift towards knowing and loving God more, we will end up drifting towards disobedience, compromise and superstition, which will drive us further and further from our own love for God and the joy of life in him.

- ❖ Q: Why is it not possible to grow in holiness and devotion without some effort and intentionality on our behalf? (If this is a struggle to comprehend, think about a marriage relationship. If a husband was never present, never spoke to his wife, or listened to what she says about herself, or learned about her character, but instead saw her once a month for 5 minutes, what would the relationship be like? Would there be solid joy, trust and a deep knowing of each other, or would it be superficial, strained and disconnected? Explain).

Take-Home; What is the one big take-away from this week's message that God is pressing you to apply to your thoughts, beliefs, attitudes or behaviours?