

Joy, Happiness (Part 2)

(Happiness Is A Serious Problem by Dennis Prager)

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (G5479 – chara = cheerfulness, joy)

Part I - Premises (Things we all agree with about Joy & Happiness)

- 1 Happiness Is a Moral Obligation
- 2 Unhappiness Is Easy—Happiness Takes Work
- 3 The Mind Plays the Central Role
- 4 There Is No Good Definition of Happiness
- 5 Life Is Tragic

Part II - Major Obstacles to Happiness and How to Deal with Them

- 6 Human Nature
- 7 Comparing Ourselves with Others
- 8 Images
- 9 The Missing Tile Syndrome
- 10 Equating Happiness with Success
- 11 Equating Happiness with Fun
- 12 Fear and Avoidance of Pain
- 13 Expectations
- 14 Family
- 15 The World Has Too Much Pain
- 16 Seeking Unconditional Love
- 17 Seeing Yourself as a Victim
- 18 The Opposite Sex
- 19 Genes or Biochemistry



Part III - Attitudes and Behaviors That Are Essential to Happiness



20 Meaning and Purpose

- Happiness can be attained under virtually any circumstances providing you believe that your life has meaning and purpose.
- It was the psychoanalyst Viktor Frankl, in Man's Search for Meaning, who first made me aware of the incomparable significance of meaning to happiness. It was as a prisoner in a Nazi death camp that Frankl observed in the starkest possible way that **people need a sense of purpose to maintain a will to live**.
- Some animals may have emotions and the ability to communicate with each other and even with humans. However, at least one difference is unbridgeable—animals do not need to have meaning in their lives. Human beings, on the other hand, **crave** meaning.
- People **derive meaning** from two beliefs:
 - the belief that **their life** has meaning (Personal meaning)
 - the belief that **life itself** has meaning (Transcendent meaning)
- **Personal** meaning is **derived** from three sources:
 - **relationships** (family and friends) - We derive immense meaning from loving, being loved, belonging, and being needed
 - **work** – (not just “making money” as volunteers find their work to be profoundly meaningful)
 - **causes** - attachment to a cause can be most powerful, but it is also the most perilous: its power for evil is as great as its power for good. With the decline of traditional **religion**, tens of millions of people have looked elsewhere for causes **to provide meaning**, and the most popular of these have created enormous evil—ideologies such as chauvinistic nationalism, racism, Communism, and Nazism.
- **Transcendent** meaning
 - personal meaning is not enough; to be happy, thoughtful people must also believe that life itself is meaningful
 - A purely secular understanding of existence can only mean that the world ultimately has neither purpose nor meaning.
- Ask before acting, “Is it meaningful?” The problem... the meaningful behavior is rarely the **most enticing** of our choices - the greatest battle for happiness is with our own nature

Psa_8:4 What is man that You are mindful of him, & the son of man that You visit him?

Ecc_3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

Job_14:14 If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes.

Ecc_6:3 If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better than he—

21 Happiness Is a By-product

- Happiness is only achievable when it is a by-product of something else, and you must hold that something to be **more important** than happiness
- **6 values** that are more important than happiness—& that therefore bring people much of it:
 - **Passionate and Meaningful Pursuits** – The more meaningful passions, the more meaning and happiness – Encourage children to develop passions!
 - **Depth** - we become deeper when we **struggle to grow**—emotionally, morally, psychologically, intellectually, and in wisdom. Human nature motivates us to seek immediate pleasure, not depth. We can choose activities beyond TV & comics
 - **Wisdom** - Wisdom may be defined as understanding, as opposed to merely knowing. We encounter people of limited education who possess great wisdom, and all of us know some highly educated people who are quite foolish
 - **Clarity – Understanding Yourself & Life** - A lack of clarity suggests that our life is in chaos; chaos suggests meaninglessness & this guarantees unhappiness. Understanding God's Plan for Mankind ...helps us cope & have explanations
 - **Goodness** - The peace of mind and sense of self-worth that derive from the pursuit of goodness are unattainable elsewhere.
 - **Pursuit of the Transcendent** - There is something in human beings that yearns for the meaning, order, community, and answers that religion uniquely provides.



Psa_111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.

1Th_4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

22 Develop Perspective: Cultivate a Philosophy of Life (a worldview)



- We determine how much we will allow something to make us unhappy - *there is little correlation between the circumstances of people's lives and how happy they are*
- Without a philosophy of life (a worldview), we do not know **how to react** to what life deals us. We need a “sober reflection” to place events into perspective—which comes from having a philosophy of life (a worldview) – so we are not at the mercy of events
- 7 examples of Philosophies of Life (worldviews)
 - **“This Too Shall Pass”** - Knowing that most storms pass is an attitude that enables many people to cope with life's difficulties.

1Pe 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now **for a little while**, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

- **“That Which Doesn't Kill Me Makes Me Stronger”** - German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche
Actually, some things that happen to people are so horrible that they are rendered weaker, not stronger ... but this worldview does mean that something positive—strength and growth—can come from otherwise negative developments.
- **There Is a Positive Aspect to What Happened** – See Point 23 Find the Positive
- **“To Live Is to Suffer”** - Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky – This was certainly true in 19th century Russia, and it has been true throughout history for much of humanity. Some hold that to “live is to suffer” = suffering is normal, not a debilitating shock

Act 14:22 ... “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

- **God Allows Unjust Suffering** – Theodicy (why is there evil when God is good?) understands God allows nature to take its course eg disease & that mankind's freewill allows evil choices and their consequences (... until God's Kingdom!)

Isa_11:9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.

Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put **My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**

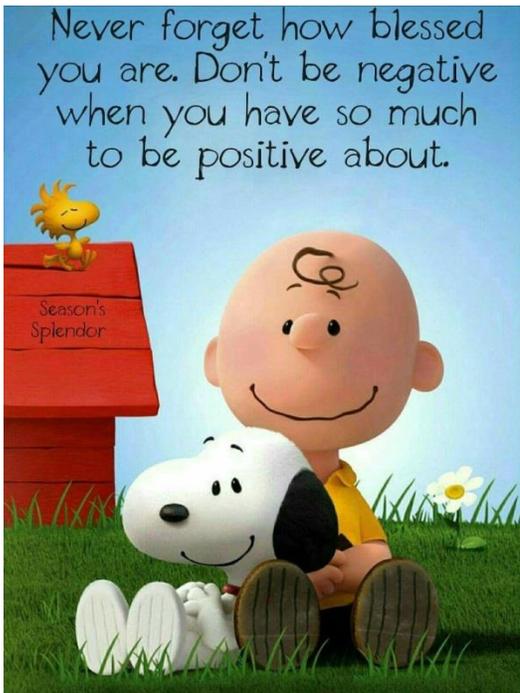
- **Given the Ubiquity of Suffering, I Am Blessed** - to be aware of recent horrors like the Holocaust, Communist gulags, and the massive butchery in Rwanda, Cambodia, and Algeria make it difficult to allow oneself to become unhappy over far lesser problems.

Gen 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

- **Belief in an Afterlife** – provides joy to those who may be suffering today

Joh_14:2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

1Co_2:9 But as it is written: "**EYE HAS NOT** SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."



23 Find the Positive

- There is almost always a positive element in a negative situation, just as there is almost always a negative aspect to a positive situation. Choosing to find the positive and emphasizing it is not in any way a form of self-delusion.

- If you value growth, you will value virtually every situation because there are very few situations from which you cannot learn and therefore grow.

- Finding good in virtually every situation is in **no way** the same as the belief that **“everything turns out for the best.”** That belief is, unfortunately, nonsense. There are innumerable instances of things not turning out for the best.

- Those who choose to find the positive that can be found in virtually every situation will be blessed. Those who choose to find the awful in every situation will be cursed. As with happiness itself, this is largely your decision to make.

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Php 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

24 Accept Tension

- Since tension is painful, people try to avoid it, and in so doing they decrease their chances for happiness. For tension is necessary to all growth.
- The more we are **involved in life** and the **richer our life**, the more tension we will experience. **Maturity** and **happiness** demand *dealing* with tension, indeed welcoming it.
- Although both are painful and inevitable, there is a *significant difference* between necessary tension & unnecessary tension, or what we will call here **stress or aggravation**
- With stress you must: **identify the source** as precisely as possible and do whatever you can to either **remove it** from your life, learn to **live with it**, **ignore it**, or at the very least, **minimize it**.



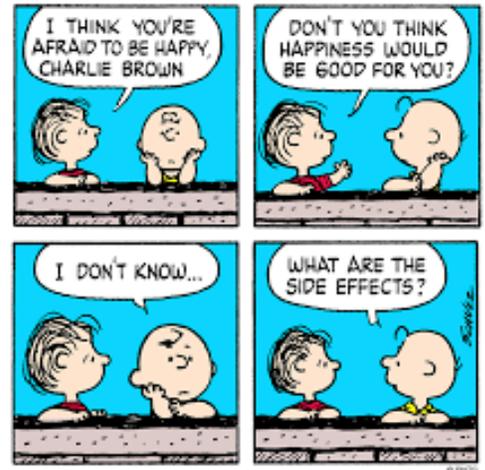
Psa 94:19 In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

Mat 6:31-34 "Therefore **do not worry**, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and **all these things shall be added** to you. Therefore **do not worry** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.



25 Everything Has a Price—Know What It Is

- Nobel laureate economist Milton Friedman was asked to summarize the essence of **economics** in a sentence. There are no free lunches,” he responded. *Everything* has a price.
- 3 rules Relating this to Happiness:
 - 1. Make peace with the fact that *everything* in life has a price
 - 2. **Determine** each price for all you desire
 - 3. **Choose** whether to pay the price or to forgo what you desire



- Unless you follow all three of these rules, happiness is **unattainable**—because you will constantly be **angry** at the prices you pay for everything you have, & everything you do
- Examples: Pros & Cons of Marriage or staying single ... Pros & Cons of having a child
- NOTE: Each has great advantages, and each demands a great price.
- Note 2: You can't have all the advantages of each choice (eg being married & single)
- **Whatever** line of work you choose exacts a **price**. The number of hours you work exacts a price. The number of children you have exacts a price. There is a price paid in owning a house, as there is to living in an apartment, or living in the city, or living in the country. There are prices paid for leading a religious life, and there are prices paid for leading a secular life. There are prices paid for living near your parents and prices paid for moving to another city.
- The list of **prices paid** is as long as the list of activities in which we engage, because each one exacts a price. Here, as everywhere else in life, therefore, happiness demands clarity (determining what the prices are) and maturity (deciding what to do and then not complaining—at least, not too much).

Luk 14:25-33 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not **bear his cross** and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and **count the cost**, whether he has enough to finish it— lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and **consider** whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not **forsake all** that he has cannot be My disciple.

26 Accept the Lower Parts of Your Nature



- Everyone has miserable parts. We have tendencies toward meanness, selfishness, envy, cruelty, gluttony, dishonesty, lust, avarice, irresponsibility, and hedonism. A few of us have **all** these tendencies, and all of us have **some** of these tendencies. In fact, the very best people have tendencies toward all or nearly all of these negative traits—because **great character** is defined by our **struggle** with the worst parts of our nature rather than by not having these parts.
- The most important thing to understand when it comes to our baser parts is not only how normal and natural it is to have them but that there is **nothing wrong** in having them. Bad is doing bad, usually not thinking bad, and it is certainly not merely having bad tendencies.
- A major part of leading a moral life is being able to identify our darker parts and being able to control them, and a major part of psychological health and happiness is learning how to identify these parts and how to defang them.

1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Rom 7:23-25 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Col 3:8-10 But now you yourselves are to **put off** all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the **old man** with his deeds, and have put on the **new man** who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him

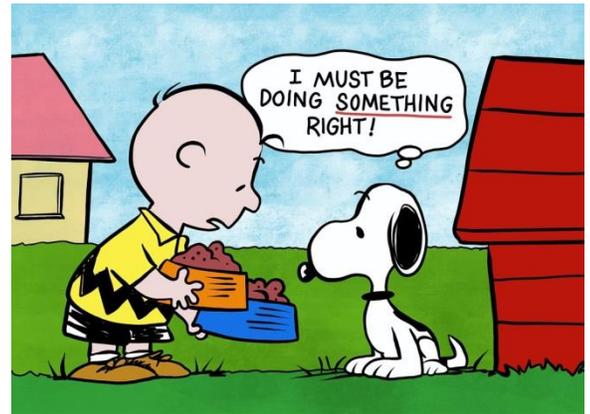
27 Allow Innocuous Expression of Your Lower Parts

- As long as we have negative and dark impulses and feelings but do not act on them, those feelings should not impede either a happy or a good life. Learning about our lower parts and how to express them innocuously is vital to our happiness.

Psa 69:5 O God, You know my foolishness; And my sins are not hidden from You.

28 Seek to Do Good

- There is no doubt that doing something immoral often brings immediate benefits. *If doing the bad thing never brought benefits, no one would ever do it.* People cheat precisely because there can be immediate benefits to cheating. People lie, steal, murder, and rape for the same reason
- In the long run - over the course of a lifetime - Are good people more likely to be happier than bad ones? I believe the answer is yes for two reasons.
 - We regard the good people we know as having much greater **inner peace**.
 - If you go through life cheating others, you will go through life **expecting others** to cheat you. Liars expect to be lied to; cheaters expect to be cheated; and so on
- Another unhappy consequence of leading a bad life—**loneliness** and a **lack of love**. The bad may have money, power, and fame, but they do not have **friends** (though they may well have sycophants). Being surrounded by finer people, receiving more love, and having friends are significant contributions to happiness.
- The most important characteristic linking goodness and happiness is **gratitude** (which was identified as the MOST IMPORTANT quality for having Joy in your life)



Psa 34:14 Depart from evil and **do good**; Seek peace and pursue it.

Ecc_3:12 I know that nothing is better for them than to **rejoice**, and to **do good** in their lives,

Isa_1:17 Learn to **do good**; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.

29 Develop Self-Control



- If **human nature** is the single greatest obstacle to happiness, **controlling our nature** is the single greatest step toward happiness – but self-control is not emphasized because:

- It's difficult
- Seems like a “downer” – Saying “no” to yourself doesn't seem the road to joy
- It doesn't sell ... eg Happiness! Say Yes to Self or Happiness! Say No to Self
- Today's *spirit in society* glorifies getting ALL we want ... not self-denial

- If you want **financial success**, you need the **self-control** to waste little time on fun things that don't contribute to your personal and professional development. If you want **happy and healthy children**, you need the self-control to spend a great deal of time with them (thus depriving yourself of time to do what you want to do for yourself).
- Freedom is often wrongly assumed to be “doing whatever we want”. Actually, *Freedom is being able to do what will bring you happiness*—and that takes constant **self-control**:
 - develop habits of self-control (to **start** or **stop** behaviours)
 - never lose sight of your **goal**
- The only way to get what you ultimately want is to **deny** yourself short-term **pleasures that interfere with your goal**.



2Ti 1:7 God has not given us a spirit of fear & timidity, but of power, love, & **self-discipline**.

Pro 16:32 Better to be patient than powerful; better to have **self-control** than to conquer a city.

30 Find and Make Friends

- Humans are social creatures. We don't merely want companionship, we need it to survive.
- Deep human companionship is normally achieved through family, marriage, and friendship. Ideally, we experience companionship through all three, but the good news is that any one of them can be profoundly fulfilling:
 - **Family** - Our first deep companionship, yet often “time-bound” as we become adults, most of us spend much less time with our parents, grandparents. If we start out with loving family relationships, our chances for joy are incalculably increased
 - **Marriage**- When it is good, marriage is the most profound form of companionship a human can experience.
 - First, only marriage combines all three forms of companionship—a spouse is family, best friend, and permanent companion. That is why it is widely held that while the death of a child is the most painful loss, the death of a spouse is the most disorienting one.
 - Second, unlike all other family relationships and unlike all other friendships, marriage alone combines those elements with sex, a uniquely powerful form of bonding.
 - Third, unlike other family relationships, which are nearly all unequal (parent-child; older sibling-younger sibling), a good marriage is a relationship of equals.

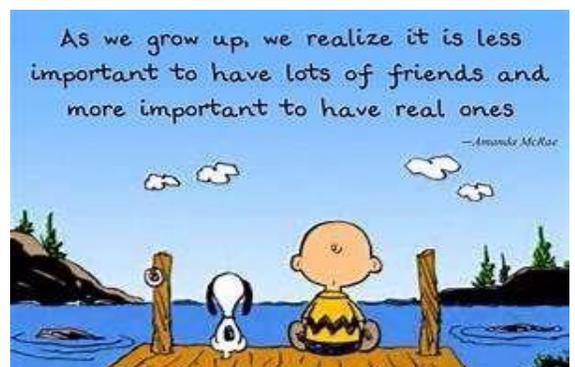
- Fourth, unlike both family and friends, we are with our wife or husband virtually every day. And the concept of “quality time” notwithstanding, quantity of time is a quality, one that has a powerfully bonding effect. Women intuitively know this better than men, which is why it is they who generally demand more time with their spouse

Little in life is as good as a good marriage, and little in life is as bad as a bad marriage. Therefore choosing a spouse is one of the **two most important decisions of our life** (the other is whether to have a child) and must be made as wisely as possible.

- **Friends** - Friends are the people we choose to accompany us through life; they are our chosen companions on our journey. A **close friend** is a person whom we **love**, whom we **trust**, and in whom we can **confide** (yes, a family member can be such a friend). When thus defined, it is understandable why friends are so important and why they are not plentiful. Few adults make finding friends a priority. This is a mistake, but it can be easily rectified when you see their importance.
 - **First, Know Their Values** - One way to find friends is to become active in groups whose members are likely to have a high proportion of individuals who share your values. (ie Talk to them about “heavy subjects, See how they treat others)
 - **Why Close Friends Ought to Be of the Same Sex**
 - Spouses are unlikely to tolerate your having an ongoing intimate relationship with another person of the opposite sex
 - men understand men better than they understand women, & vice versa
 - such friendships often stay platonic to only one of the friends. This is not odd. If a man and a woman confide in each other and love each other—as friends should—it is hardly surprising attraction develops
 - **Keeping Friends**
 - **Forgive them their flaws** ... all humans are flawed ...so consider:
 - The friend’s **record** –trustworthy friends deserve forgiveness
 - The friend’s **motive** – Most actions are not malicious/mean
 - **Couples need Couples** - It is difficult to overstate how much **stress** can be reduced when people learn that **their problems are shared by others**.

Pro 18:24 A man who has friends must himself be friendly ...

Pro 12:26 The righteous should choose his friends carefully...



31 Religion

- Religious fanatics are unhappy people who bend religion by and to their troubled psyches. Conversely, the finest of religious people are also the psychologically healthiest—because they are free to find in religion its **greatest truths** & **apply it** most healthfully to themselves and to the world.
- Religion is, in the well-known words of Marx and Engels, the “opiate of the masses.” Even antireligious activists acknowledge the power of religion to provide comfort and happiness. They can argue that religion is a fraud, but they cannot argue that it doesn’t bring people happiness.
- No thinking person can be truly happy believing that ultimately everything is pointless.
- Every great philosophy, religious and secular, Eastern and Western, has stressed that a happy and good life must emphasize **moderation in all things**.



Rom 12:12 **Rejoice** in **hope**, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

Isa 58:13-14 If you refrain from trampling the **sabbath**, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; **if you call the sabbath a delight** and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; **then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you** with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Php 4:4 **Rejoice** in the **Lord** always. Again I will say, **rejoice!**

The pursuit of happiness is a noble human endeavor, no less so than any other. It is an art that demands no less proficiency than playing a classical sonata. It is an accomplishment no less worthy than climbing a great mountain. It involves:

- constant use of the **mind** and
- constant **self-discipline**.

The route to the attainment of **Joy & Happiness** confers **wisdom** and inculcates **gratitude**.

Let’s work to be “filled to the brim” ... with this **fruit of the Spirit** ... **Joy!**