

The Difference Between Happiness and Joy

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the distinction between fleeting happiness and enduring joy found in a relationship with Christ and aligning our desires with God's will.

Scripture: Proverbs 13:12, John 3:16, Acts 3:19, Romans 3:23, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Spiritual Prosperity", "True Fulfillment"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the importance of aligning our desires with God's will to experience true fulfillment and purpose in life. He highlights that material possessions, success, and achievements do not bring lasting happiness, but rather a genuine relationship with Christ is the source of hope and joy. Idleman stresses the significance of spiritual prosperity as the foundation for overall health and well-being, urging individuals to prioritize their soul's condition above all else. He challenges the notion that quality alone is sufficient, emphasizing the importance of both quality and quantity in various aspects of life, including relationships and time management.

Transcript

In the years preceding my decision to commit my life to Christ, I was restless and unhappy. I thought that a move would help; therefore, I would often spend time in the mountains or at the beach, but the void never left. It would be years later before I would understand why I lacked fulfillment and a genuine passion for life.

We were designed to fellowship with God, to do His will and to obey His principles. Walking outside of this plan often brings discouragement and disappointment. Searching for purpose affects every area of life. It can determine where we'll live, whom we'll marry, where we'll work and how we'll spend our time. Unfortunately, many search for purpose and meaning in material possessions, hobbies and other things that do not hold eternal value. If you believe that materially successful people are happy, think again. Most of us understand that money can buy the best mattress, but it can't guarantee sleep. Why do millionaires, movie stars and top entertainers often turn to spirituality, drugs and alcohol for the answers if success satisfies? Many discover that money, fame and recognition are not the answers. CEO's, presidents and vice presidents frequently admit that they are happy when they reach production goals, but very unhappy when under budget, largely because they measure happiness by what's happening to them. When things go well, they're happy, when things go poorly, they're un-happy. I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't be productive, but if happiness is measured by our circumstances, it's going to be a very rough road.

One of the happiest times in my life was when I down-sized and simplified many things. During this transition, I quickly learned that the more I owned, the more owned me. Goals, dreams and aspirations are God's desire for our lives, but when these things are based on self-gratification, we encounter problems emotionally, physically and spiritually.

Proverbs 13:12 states, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life." In other words, when our godly desires are fulfilled, it brings joy to our lives. The goal then is to align our desires with God's. God wants us to experience a fulfilled and abundant life, but we must look to the right source. Abundant life can include material wealth, but it does not depend upon it.

God plants desire in our heart. Without desire, one is not inclined to pursue vocations like medicine, law, professional ministry, education, construction, sales and so on. God wants us to pursue our interests. Again, He is the one who created that desire, but our definition of prosperity often centers on financial prosperity, or what makes us comfortable.

When I worked in the health and fitness industry, many of us wanted to retire at a young age and do nothing but fish or relax on the beach. This sounds nice, but it shouldn't be our ultimate goal. God wants us to enjoy these things, but not to make them a primary focus. Ill John 2 states, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." The statement, as your soul prospers, reminds us that spiritual prosperity is first and foremost; it is fundamental to our overall health and sense of well-being. In short, we can't experience true success and fulfillment without first considering the health of our soul.

Prosperity, by most definitions, means a state of abundance. A husband may want a large home, expensive toys and a huge bank account, but that's not what his wife needs. She needs to first feel a sense of emotional security, attention, understanding, compassion and a relationship with her husband. Ask most men how they are doing, and they'll immediately tell you about their business, their career, or their education. On occasions, I've made this mistake. My friend brought this to my attention when he restated the question, "No, I mean how is your wife, your family and your relationship with the Lord?"

I often hear men say that it's quality not quantity that counts when it comes to spending time with family members. (Often, this is just an excuse to be absent from home as much as possible.) Let's apply this thought to other areas of life and test its validity. Does a quality ten-minute workout once a week produce results? Does eating a quality meal once a week lead to better health? Does spending a few quality minutes at work lead to financial success? You can see where this is going...both quality and quantity matter. Try this test: invite your wife and kids to honestly share how important time is to them; you may be surprised at their answer.

In closing, lasting hope and joy can only come from a genuine relationship with Christ. No matter what you've done, you have the opportunity to believe in Jesus and be forgiven of sin. 1. Acknowledge that you are a sinner in need of a Savior (Romans 3:23). 2. Acknowledge that Jesus died for your sins (John 3:16). 3. Repent and turn from your sins (Acts 3:19). 4. Live your life for Him (Hebrews 12:1-2). The cross cleanses, redeems, releases, crushes, and triumphs. It offers hope and peace to a dying world. "There is no peace until we see the finished work of Jesus Christ--until we can look back and see the cross of Christ between our sins" (D.L. Moody).

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