

Faith that Works: How to Be Happy When the World is Falling Apart

Part 2: Illogically Happy

James 1:22-26

INTRO

Everybody wants to be happy.

Everyone is on a quest for happiness.

- Affects every choice we make: Job, relationships, schoolwork, how vote, even religion

Nothing wrong with that... God wants us to be happy

C.S. Lewis- "Joy is the serious business of Heaven."

Seems impossible to achieve... especially as you get older and realize just how hard life is... particularly right now.

But we keep trying... can't help it... it's how we are wired.

Unfortunately what we often think will make us happy doesn't... at least not for very long

- Spending, "Self-care", vacations, politics... nothing wrong w/ but lasts only so long
- Long-term, we have to admit: **Happiness doesn't come from trying to make ourselves happy.**
- Think that happiness is a gas tank/bank account we have to keep refilling.
- But there's something better...

John 4:14

But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.

- The happiness/life Jesus offers is like a spring that is continually re-filling and flowing satisfying from now forward forever
- **Jesus offers an unending reservoir of happiness**

Not JF's- Yeah I'm sure "more religion" is what will make me happy...

JF's- Well yeah I'll be happy when I die and go to heaven but for now I just need to be good and get through my life.

It might sound unbelievable/over the top, but Jesus wasn't reality in the false-hope, "lying to make you feel good," "exaggerate to sound better" business.

If he says it I take him at his word b/c... resurrection.

So did his little brother **James**... who gives us the path to finding this lasting happiness... Book of James

Last episode- Happy life is a dependent life.

Today... Illogical and likely challenging, so many won't want to hear this, but- **A happy life is not about me.**

GOD (Solution)

V. 22 and 25

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise you are only fooling yourselves.

But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you [make you happy] for doing it.

Interesting relationship between "God's word"/ "perfect law" and doing it that creates happiness.

God's word- Often used to describe the bible... sure. How God chose to reveal to us everything we need to know in order to know who he is, etc.

- But James obviously isn't talking about the NT... didn't exist yet.
- So do what the OT says? Sacrifice bulls, etc.? No... we're not ancient Israel. From JF perspective- Jesus fulfilled.
- So what is it?

Gospel

- Separated
- God loved so much that he came and died and rose
- Forgiven, clear, perfect relationship...
- Not just something we believe... it's something we also DO.
- TRANSFORMED... new life, new actions
- **Following Jesus isn't just believing... it's doing.**
- A trust that changes everything about our lives...

Free to follow Perfect Law... not **10 commandments**... better/simpler/more encompassing...

- Goes far beyond simply following God's rules... it's about what really matters- Our Heart.
- **LAW OF LOVE**... Love God... and as an expression of that love... Love others. **Mark 12:30-31**
- The two depend on each other... If you don't really love your neighbor you don't really love God.
- And there is no way to love your neighbor (consistently, selflessly, and effectively) without the love of God.

B/c God loved us so much we are now free to love him and express it through how we love others...

- When we DO that it gives us the happiness Jesus promised.
- Happiness comes from loving others through the love of God.

"Do what it says" = "Doing" continual/consistent... Lifestyle / Habit / Mission in Life

James gives a specific example and summarizes...

V. 26-27

If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

Nothing wrong with religious activity... but those things are gifts God gives for us (Worship... God doesn't really need it, angels sing better. It's a gift he gives us to realize who he is and focus on it).

The true test of what we believe is what we do... if we say we believe but it doesn't affect what we do... we are only **fooling** ourselves.

- True belief, according to James, proves itself by loving/serving those who find themselves needing help in our communities and by living out moral purity.
- Jesus Followers who are being transformed to be more like Jesus imitate him by intervening to help those who need help.

- Lifestyle
- **JF**- Life is a mission to love/serve/do what's best for others.
- **Eph. 2:10** *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, SO WE CAN DO the good things he planned for us long ago.*

Happiness comes from a faith that results in loving others.

In case still asking, "Yeah but I believe in God. I do all the religious stuff... why am I not happy?"

2:14, 17, 26

What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that faith save anyone?

So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.

Good works don't earn us God's love...

But our love for God is shown by what we do

- Jesus: "If you love me, you will obey my commandments."
- It's THE natural product of a love for God and it's the evidence of it too!
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Genuine faith naturally produces good works... it's just what it does. A fire creates heat... it's just what it does.

True faith always manifests itself in a love for God that creates a love of others

If faith doesn't compel us to act out of unconditional love toward others, it is not faith.

YOU (Application)

Want to be happy? Happy that lasts?

- Explore what it means to follow Jesus... to LOVE God
- What it means to trust that you are loved.

THEN

Ask Yourself two questions...

Self-Reflection: Is what I believe transforming how I love (act, NOT feel)?

Real Life Action: What does love look like?

- Practice it... do it.
- Start simple (and probably most difficult)... Family/Coworkers/neighbors.
- What does active, 'take the first step' love look like?

Last week- A Happy life is a dependent life... Ask for wisdom. And ask for his love to motivate and move you. It's his love that gives us the ability to truly love others.

Not dependent on your energy, feelings, ideas... HS to empower you and guide you to where you are needed.

Read the section all of this is from: **James 1:19-2:26**

WE (Inspiration)

We are on a happiness quest...

God has a purpose for our lives... Love Him and Love those that he loves

The one satisfies the other...

As we learn to selflessly love others we increasingly discover a happiness that lasts.

Our level of happiness is the direct result of how much of our life we give away.

Mark 8:35

If you try to hang on to your life you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.

QUESTIONS

1. Talk about a time when acting selflessly made you happier. Why do you think you felt happy?
2. As a group, read Matthew 7:15-27. How do you think this relates to what we know God wants us to do and how we actually act?
3. Everyone has a “knowing/doing” gap. What would you say yours is and how can your group pray for you this week to close this gap?