

Be Happy This New Year!

1 Thessalonians 5:16; Coast Community Church; Earl Miles; 1-1-2023

1. Does God really want us to be happy?

The Answer: Yes! 'Rejoice' is a command. And God commands what He wills or wants for His creatures and His children. But it is the Enemy's strategy to make us doubt it. (Genesis 3:1-6) The ministry of the Lord Jesus highlights it. (John 2:1-11; Zechariah 10:7) God is love. Love wants the beloved to be happy. (1 John 4:8) **Be happy because it is the command of Love.** God commands us to be happy. It is His revealed will for us. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Psalm 100:2; Psalm 37:4; Deuteronomy 28:47-48; Isaiah 55:2; Nehemiah 8:10; Isaiah 52:7)

If I were to ask you why you have believed in Christ, why you have become Christians, every man will answer truly, "For the sake of happiness." – Augustine

2. Aren't happiness and joy different?

The Answer: No, when properly defined. Most English versions translate this verse with 'rejoice' but some translate it as 'always be happy' or 'always be joyful' or 'be happy in your faith at all time'. We may have a sneaky suspicion that what we call happiness is not what God has in mind. Some will argue that joy and happiness are very different. **Joy is happiness in God!** (Psalm 37:4; Philippians 4:4) Joy is more than pleasure, but not less; Joy is more than what we typically call happiness, but not less; it is the pleasure and happiness in God for which we were created! It is found by grace through faith in Christ; it is tasted here in a fallen world but fully realized in the world to come. (Psalm 16:11; Philippians 1:25) To rejoice is to remember God and His love and His promises to us in Jesus, for the past, present and future, so that we are glad and happy at all times and seasons, even while it is also appropriate, at times and for good reasons, to be sad and mad! (Isaiah 64:5a; Psalm 31:6-9) **Be happy because of your real circumstances.** To be happy is rooted in the right circumstances not apart from circumstances: namely, the God of our circumstances, both seen and unseen. (Jonah 4:1-11) In order to be happy in our circumstances we need to trust the God who is over them and working through them for our good. (James 1:2) What is most real and lasting is unseen; and this is what our happiness must be rooted in and shaped by. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Thou made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in Thee. - Augustine

3. Can I be happy as well as sad and mad?

The Answer: Yes, when both the sadness and madness are appropriate responses to suffering and sin. The command to 'rejoice' is both all-inclusive ('all of you') and all-extensive ('all the time'). 'Always' is at the head of the sentence for emphasis! The context of this little verse helps us think it through: the return of Christ and grieving the loss of beloved believers (4:13; 5:2); evil being done to us and the temptation to retaliate (5:15); the need to pray for grace (5:17); the need to give thanks by trusting in God's good providence (5:18). Is God ever grieved? (John 11:14-15, 35) Is God ever mad/angry? (Mark 3:4-5; Isaiah 9:1-3) **Be happy even while you are sad or**

mad. To be happy is consistent with a right response to suffering and evil. We can be happy even when we have good reason to be sad and/or mad. (Psalm 31:6-9)

God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing. - C. S. Lewis

4. Does God command us to be something He's not?

The Answer: No, God wants and commands our happiness because He is happy. Is God happy? Yes! (Luke 15:3-10; John 15:11; Psalm 16:11) How do we often define 'happiness'? 'Doing and being whatever I want.' This is true of God. (Psalm 115:3; Psalm 135:6) The problem is that we think that the definition of happiness is doing whatever we want. This is not true. The definition of 'happiness' for creatures is doing and being whatever our Creator wants! **Be happy because your God is.** To be happy we must see God as happy, especially with us. God is happy in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is happy with His children (and not angry with them) because of His Son. God is happy with the ending He has planned and purposed. God's delight or happiness is often mentioned in Scripture in various ways. (Psalm 36:7-9; Proverbs 8:27-31; Proverbs 15:8; Isaiah 42:1; Isaiah 62:4; Jeremiah 9:24; Micah 7:18)

God expressly bestows the name Gospel on the message which he orders to be proclaimed concerning Christ; for thus he reminds us that nowhere else can true and solid happiness be obtained, and that in him we have all that is necessary for the perfection of a happy life.

– John Calvin, Gospel of John

5. Doesn't God want us to be holy, not happy?

The Answer: No, God wants us to be holy and happy! This implies that you can be holy and not happy or that holiness is unnecessary or even a hindrance to happiness! In fact, holiness is being and doing all that God commands, including being happy! Holiness is putting to death sin in the pursuit of love and this results in our happiness and the happiness of others. **Be happy through trust and love.** To be happy I must be holy. Happiness is a gift and something to pursue. We pursue our happiness in God through trust: resting in Jesus and hoping in God. We pursue our happiness in God through love: submission to His Word and His will. (John 15:11; Psalm 119:111; John 16:24; 1 John 1:4)

Christ wishes his people to be happy. When they are perfect, as he will make them in due time, they shall also be perfectly happy. As heaven is the place of pure holiness, so is it the place of unalloyed happiness; and in proportion as we get ready for heaven, we shall have some of the joy which belongs to heaven, and it is our Saviour's will that even now his joy should remain in us, and that our joy should be full. – Charles Spurgeon

The question is: How will we seek happiness and in Whom or in what?

“Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can, with all the power; might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of. – Jonathan Edwards, Resolution #22