

God, Make Me Happy

"If I could lose this weight, I'd be happy." "If I could land this job, happiness would be mine!" "I would be so happy if I could just..." Sound familiar?

Happiness isn't dependent on whether we reach a set goal. Happiness is a prize we can all obtain if we follow God's foolproof plan. *"Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."* (Psalm 144:15b)

Happiness is a state of mind – being content. It's not something God gives us. It's something that happens to us as we yield to God and to His Word. It's a by-product of holy living.

Proverbs 3:13 says, *"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding."* God's Holy Spirit enables us to understand God's Word. As we study and yield to God's Word and will, we are blessed (happy). Jesus said so in John 13:17 – *"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."*

In Acts 26:2, Paul stands before Agrippa and says, *"I think myself happy..."* Happy? How could he be happy in light of all that was taking place? Paul embraced God's Word and His will. His goal is found in Philippians 3:9-14: to *"...be found in him...that I may know him...being made conformable unto his death...forgetting those things which are behind...reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* And the result is seen in Philippians 4:11, *"...I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."* True happiness is found only as we conform to the image of Christ. God doesn't make us happy. He will, however, make us holy. Then we, like Paul, can say *"I think myself happy."*

"Behold, we count them happy which endure" (James 5:11)

(At the time of this writing, Suzan Hutchinson lived in Colquitt, GA, where her husband Tim pastored the New Salem FWB Church. Suzan enjoys writing, gardening, reading, and collecting seashells.)

God, Hear My Prayers

"Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer" (Psalm 4:1).

Who among us has not groaned in our spirit: *"O God, have mercy...hear my prayer"?*

"The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry" (Psalm 34:15).

Can we truly expect God to hear us when we pray?

"I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Psalm 40:1).

Not only does He hear, He leans over, cupping His hand to His ear to catch our faintest cry. He is ever listening. Do you believe that? I do. Let me share a recent incident.

While browsing a Christian bookstore, I picked up a colorful book and leafed through it. As my husband Tim walked past, he noticed my interest and asked if I would like to have it. "Maybe," I shrugged. "I'll let you know."

I looked once again at the book lying open in my hands; tears came unbidden. I blinked them back in surprise.

The next morning I emailed a friend. "I find myself struggling today. Yesterday while looking at a book in a Christian bookstore, I broke down and wept. I am not one to cry. Would you and your wife please pray for me today? I just need a little guidance, a little reassurance that I'm on the right track and knowledge whether or not the Lord wants me to continue on the course He has set for me."

My friend wrote back: "You can count on our prayers. I will pray that you have assurance about that. God has His hand on you, so do not fret."

That afternoon while on a hospital visit, Tim stopped by that same bookstore. Upon returning home, he placed the book I had wept over in my hands and said, "I thought it might inspire you to keep on...."

He was not aware of my tears or the email I had sent. But, God was aware. And the book was God's visible answer to my cry.

"I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live" (Psalm 116:1,2).

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God, Satisfy My Longings

"Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee" (Psalm 38:9).

Yes, every one of us has secret longings. You do and so do I. Here, let me show you. I wish my nose was smaller, my eyebrows darker, and that I wasn't succumbing to the ravages of middle age.

What? That's petty? Superficial? Well, sure it is. You didn't think I was going to share my innermost longings, did you? I mean, after all, I don't know you.

If you're honest, you have some very private longings, too—desires, hopes, wishes, dreams, yearnings that perhaps no one else knows about...for a friend, a companion, a husband...a baby, a grandchild, word from distant loved ones...a new job, a home, a purpose...to be whole in body, mind and soul...for freedom from pain, forgiveness, a fresh start...to be heard, for someone to care, understand and love you...to be at peace with the past, the present and the future...for lost loved ones and loved ones lost.

Privately, we groan, agonizing over our frustrations, failures, and flaws. With silent, hidden tears we labor over hurts and disappointments. Our unmet wants and perceived needs seem larger than life. They encompass our waking hours and turn our sleepy dreams into nightmares. We ask ourselves, "Why aren't they met? Doesn't God care?" We've done everything possible to satisfy that longing, quench that thirst, fill those empty arms, satiate that hunger, heal that broken heart. And, still that longing remains.

And, it will remain until we pour our hearts out to God in humble realization that He alone is capable of performing the impossible. He knows our deepest longings. He understands. He alone knows how to satisfy.

"For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalm 107:9). He takes that empty spot—that vacant, gnawing thing that keeps us tied in knots—and fills it with Himself (Psalm 17:15).

Jesus can satisfy that dissatisfaction within you. He alone can answer the longing you feel. When He becomes the object of our desire, we will find our needs are met in Him and our longings are satisfied.

What is it you long for? Whatever it is, God can satisfy in ways you cannot imagine (Luke 6:21). Give Him an opportunity to work the impossible, the remarkable—a miracle in your life.

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God, Right My Wrongs

Sunday morning my son arrived at church a few minutes late. After the service, he pulled a yellow slip of paper from his pocket..."14 mph over speed limit." A friend asked if I'm going to "fix" the ticket for him—his first offense. I shook my head, "No."

He chose to break the law, thereby breaking the healthy relationship between government and citizen. He alone is called to give an account for that breach. If it were not for a gracious officer's discretion (84 in a 55 zone is **29 mph**, not 14), his penalty would be much greater, creating a hardship not only for him, but for his friends and family as well.

My son had a flawed view of himself and faltered in his decision to do right. He failed to realize what others thought and expected of him. And he forgot that as a child of God, he has responsibilities to himself, his country, the laws of the land, other drivers, his neighbors, his family and above all, to God. His actions revealed his expectation—that God would allow him to cruise through life in excess of established limits, giving little regard to the welfare of others who share the road. He expected God to right his wrong.

And, we're guilty of the same thing. We want our own way and when we mess up, we expect God to step in and make things right. God forgives, but sin's consequences are not necessarily cancelled.

David's sin with Bathsheba is an example of sin's penalty and man's cry, "God, right my wrong!" "*Have mercy...blot out my transgressions...wash me...cleanse me...deliver me*" (Psalm 51:1-14). Yes, God forgave David, but the consequence of broken relationships troubled him throughout the remainder of his life. "*...the sword shall never depart...evil against thee...the child...shall surely die*" (2 Samuel 12:7-19). Sin's consequences—traffic tickets, broken friendships, ruined marriages, split churches—exact payment from all.

God will forgive our sin and assist in righting our wrong if we will but ask.

A healthy view of who we are frees us to love others. Understanding what others expect provides a way to avoid confusion, diffuse anger, and limit frustration in relationships. Adopting God's perspective empowers and enables, enriching friendships and strengthening relationships.

"Search me, O God...renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 139:23a; 51:10b)

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God, Give Meaning to My Life

My family's in bed and I'm still going strong. There is so much to do and tomorrow's another day filled with its own needs and responsibilities.

At 2 a.m. I tumble, fretting and tired, into bed. I wonder what—if anything—I've accomplished today. Everything I did has to be done again tomorrow and the next day and....

The alarm jars me awake. Another frustrating day of questions has dawned. "What am I doing and why? What am I accomplishing? Will this whirlwind of activity ever stop? Isn't there more to life than this?"

Elijah asked himself those same questions. He found answers, but not where he expected. To his surprise, God met him—not in the tumultuous wind, the fearsome earthquake, or the shimmering fire (I Kings 19:11-12). It was in the stillness of a quiet whisper that God met Elijah. And in that quiet whisper, Elijah found strength, direction, and renewed meaning for his life.

Oh, I know, God spoke to Job through a whirlwind (Job 38:1), but it was a whirlwind of God's making, not Job's. There's a difference. God says, "Be still, and know that I am God..." (Psalm 46:10a).

We can't know who He is without understanding who we are. He is Almighty God, Creator, and Sustainer of all that is. We are His, created by Him for His glory, not for our own (Isaiah 43:7; I Corinthians 6:20). Apart from that, everything is chaos—a whirlwind of activity with no purpose, no meaning.

Our gracious God has given us gifts and talents. They are not for our pleasure or gain, but rather for us to use in service to Him (I Corinthians 12:7), for His glory, for the benefit of other Christians (I Corinthians 14:12), and for the salvation of those without Christ (Matthew 5:16). Everything we are, everything we do, can and should revolve around bringing glory to God. What easier way than through the gifts He has given us!

If you think you don't have any gifts, think again. There's a good possibility your gifts can be found where your passions and interests lie. Center your whirlwind of activity on bringing glory to God and send it off in the direction of your gifts. Watch out! You'll find purpose, direction, and meaning for your life. Plug into God's great power source and let your light shine.

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God, Grant My Wishes and Fulfill My Desires

Starry-eyed children. Wish lists. Hopes and dreams. Early morning anticipation. Unconstrained excitement. Christmas, of course. That wonderful time of year when children believe anything is possible and everything is attainable.

As a parent, I know each wish won't be granted, nor every desire fulfilled. It's just not possible and often not prudent to give them everything they ask. Parental wisdom dictates gifts with the child's best interest in mind—age, maturity, and safety must be considered.

It's tough being a parent. We want to give our children so many good gifts. Jesus said, *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him"* (Matthew 7:11).

Like children, we want what we shouldn't, and our wish lists contain what we may not be ready to receive. We beg, "Please, God, let me have this. Oh, God, I need....If only I had...." We wonder why God doesn't grant every wish. Right now.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). We can trust God to do what's best for us every time. He who is faithful loves us, cares for us, knows all about us, sees what we can't, and understands everything concerning us. We wait for the fulfillment of our hopes and desires in the knowledge that God will not withhold any good thing from us. In faith, we let Him define *good*.

It's easy to become discouraged when we've prayed and prayed and it seems our prayers go unanswered. *"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick..."* (Proverbs 13:12a). But don't stop there. Look at the second half of the verse. *"...but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life"* (Proverbs 13:12b). We hope in what we cannot see. We wait in faith for what is yet unknown.

Psalm 37:3-5, 7 offers instruction and promises. Trust Him. Delight in Him. Commit everything to Him. Rest in Him. Wait patiently. He will give you the desires of your heart. He will bring it to pass. He, who has promised, cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

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