

How To Be Happy Series 02  
**Get Your Perspective On Right**  
By Bill Denton

**INTRODUCTION**

**A. Illustration**

Fear can be paralyzing, causing much anxiety. However, some fears and worries are misplaced and not based on fact. *Newsweek* magazine recently made a comparison of "threats" of which people have an inaccurate perspective. The list illustrates well our sometimes unfounded or misplaced fears and worries:

- Murders: 14,180 (2008)—Suicides: 33,289 (2006)
- Children abducted by strangers: 115 (1999)—Children who drown in pools: 288 (2006)
- Burglaries: 2.2 million (2007)—Identity thefts: 8.3 million (2005)
- Shark attacks: 28 (2009)—Dog bites: 4.5 million (estimate)
- Americans killed in terrorist attacks worldwide: 33 (2008)—Americans who die from seasonal flu: 36,171 (est.)
- Deaths by allergic reaction to peanuts: 50-100 (est.)—Deaths by unintentional poisoning: 27,531 (2006)
- Fatalities in airline accidents: 321 (2005)—Fatalities in car crashes: 34,017 (2008)

*Claudia Kalb and E. White, "What Should You Really Be Afraid Of?" Newsweek magazine (5-24-2010)*

**B. The point I would hope you can see by the illustration above is that perspective is very important**

1. What we're talking about is our mental view of things
  - a. everybody's got their own unique perspective of the world and life
  - b. so much goes into shaping your perspective, it is often difficult to identify how or why you see things the way you do
  
2. Some things that shape our perspective:
  - a. your family dynamics
  - b. education or lack of it
  - c. life experiences
  - d. temperament – the way you deal with things
  - e. your sense of self
  - f. I would add faith to this mix

**C. When it comes to happiness, getting our perspective on right is crucial**

1. How you see the world, the people around you, your own life goes a very long way in determining whether you are happy or not
  
2. This morning I want us to think from scripture about this matter of perspective how it helps us become happy

## I. WALK BY FAITH NOT BY SIGHT

### A. 2 Corinthians 5:7—

7 for we walk by faith, not by sight— — NAS

1. This is one of those verses that is often quoted and used to sum up the kind of life that Christians are called to live
2. All by itself, it states an important, positive truth that ought to describe how we live
  - a. you should be able to see the perspective here
  - b. when it comes to living life, we live because we look at the world with eyes of faith
  - c. we don't live based on what we can see with our physical eyes

### B. There is much more in the broader passage of which this is a part

#### 1. 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 (NAS) —

1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. 6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight— 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. 9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

2. You might notice that the way this passage is translated in the New American Standard, the phrase, “for we walk by faith, not by sight,” is something of a parenthetical phrase
  - a. it is used to explain how we can go on living with courage when faced with the prospect of death and dying
  - b. dying isn't so bad if you think of it as going to be with the Lord
  - c. and because after we die we're going to face judgment, then we must do what is necessary during our lifetime to please the Lord
  - d. so whether you live or die, our goal is to please the Lord
  - e. that perspective of life and death is a powerful life shaping force

### C. Here is why this is important to a discussion about happiness

1. If you please God with your life, what do you have to worry about?
2. “Walk by faith” is a way of looking at things that can produce happiness

## II. SEEK THINGS ABOVE NOT ON EARTH

### A. Colossians 3:1–4 (NAS) —

1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

1. This is a passage specifically for Christians
  - a. notice the “if you have been raised up with Christ”
  - b. the perspective in this passage won’t work of unbelievers
2. Paul gives us a very specific encouragement here
  - a. keep seeking the things above, where Christ is
  - b. set your mind on the things above, not on the things on earth

### B. Illustrations

1. My pastor decided to pull a vacation surprise on his four children. "We're going to Junction City, Kansas," Peter told them. "It's where my dad used to pastor a church, and we can have lots of fun there." Meanwhile he made secret plans to spend one afternoon in Junction City, then drive on to enjoy the glories of Disney World.

Ever trusting, his children bragged to skeptical friends, "We're going to Kansas for vacation. It's great!" All during the long drive from Denver to Junction City, Peter kept up morale by describing the wonders awaiting them: playgrounds, a swimming pool, an ice cream stand, maybe even a bowling alley.

After touring Granddad's old church, the kids were ready to check into a motel and go swimming when their dad dropped the bombshell. "You know something—it's kind of boring here in Kansas. Why don't we just drive to *Disney World!*" Mom reached in a bag and pulled out four custom-made Mickey Mouse hats.

Peter expected his kids to jump up and down in delight. Instead, they complained: "Ah, who wants to get back in the van?" "What about the swimming pool? You promised!" "I thought we were going to go bowling!" The great surprise had backfired. For the next few hours Peter sat behind the steering wheel and smoldered as his children expanded on all the advantages of Junction City over Disney World.

[The whole thing reminded him of that famous quote from] C. S. Lewis: "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea." ...

[As he later pointed out in a sermon, Peter had learned a valuable lesson about human nature]: our desires are too small. We stamp our feet and insist on a merry-go-round in Junction City when Disney World's Space Mountain lies just down the road. -- Philip Yancey, "What's a Heaven For?" Christianity Today (October 1998)

2. If you attempt to talk with a dying man about sports or business, he is no longer interested. He now sees other things as more important. People who are dying recognize what we often forget, that we are standing on the brink of another world. -- William Law in Christian Perfection (a contemporary paraphrase by Marvin D. Hinten). Christianity Today, Vol. 39, no. 7.

### C. The spiritual implications should be obvious

1. A focus on earthly things will mess up happiness
2. It will do one of two things, neither of which creates true happiness
  - a. it will either convince us to find happiness in things that won't last and aren't meant to be the source of happiness
  - b. or it will cause us to miss the great source of happiness found in things above where Christ is
3. Sadly, too many of us miss real happiness because our focus is on the wrong place and the wrong things

## III. MAKE ETERNAL THINGS YOUR GOAL

### A. Philippians 3:12–14 (NAS) —

12 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

### B. Illustration

Zoe Koplowitz, 59, ran the New York City Marathon on Monday, November 5, 2007. She didn't do very well. Paula Radcliffe, for example, was the first woman to cross the finish line after 2 hours and 23 minutes. Martin Lei led the men with his time of 2:09:04. Zoe's time: 28 hours, 45 minutes.

Thirty years ago, Zoe was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. In 1988 she entered her first New York City Marathon and completed the route in just under 20 hours. That was her best finish. Since then, she's competed in the city's marathon 20 times and has also run in marathons in London and Boston.

In this year's race Zoe wore back and knee braces and walked the entire route using crutches painted purple, accompanied by supporters. For her, crossing the finish line was "a total blessing," and following the race she said, "I'm just extremely grateful. I don't get any younger, [and] my MS doesn't get any better."

One reporter noted that when the best athletes ran past her, "Zoe Koplowitz kept walking." Hard core runners went by; "she kept walking." When the last person in the race crossed the finish line, "she kept walking."

An official of New York City's Multiple Sclerosis Society said this about Zoe: "She's not letting MS change her life. I think she is a real champion."

-- Deepti Hajela (Associated Press), "Woman with MS last to cross finish line," [NEWSDAY.com](http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,351717,00.html) (11-5-07)

C. The point is this: a life without purpose or a goal is most often an unhappy life

1. So if eternal things, the things above were Christ is, constitute your goal then you'll forever have something to look forward to, and that creates a sense of happiness
2. The problem with too many people is their goals are set too low

#### IV. HOW DO THESE THINGS RELATE TO HAPPINESS?

A. Here are the ideas I've shared with you today

1. You need to walk by faith not by sight – what you see with your physical eyes will fool you; your faith is the key to happiness
2. Seek things above not on earth – if you believe in Jesus, then you know that this earth is temporary; set your mind on eternal things
3. Make eternal things your goal – your goal in life, where you're headed and how you're getting there makes all the difference when it comes to real happiness

B. I want you to know that these ideas help us become happy because they help us satisfy the deepest desires of life

1. You were made for eternal things, not this temporary world
2. Deep down inside, there is a part of us that was meant to relate to God in a way that nothing else in creation can
3. Cheapen or shortchange yourself by trying to find happiness in stuff that was never meant to make you happy is a true downer
4. The ideas I've shared will not, by themselves, produce happiness – they will put you on the right track to happiness

#### CONCLUSION

A. Illustration

If you attempt to talk with a dying man about sports or business, he is no longer interested. He now sees other things as more important. People who are dying recognize what we often forget, that we are standing on the brink of another world. -- William Law in Christian Perfection (a contemporary paraphrase by Marvin D. Hinten). Christianity Today, Vol. 39, no. 7.

B. Real happiness lies in another world

1. Yes, you can fool yourself, or be fooled, into counting on this world and the things in it to make you happy
2. Won't work in the long run – get your perspective on right to be happy

C. Invitation