

How To Be Happy 03
Three Keys To Happiness
By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. We've been talking about happiness for the past couple of weeks

1. We talked about the enigma of happiness
 - a. some people are happy when we don't see any reason for it
 - b. others are unhappy when they've got all the reasons to be happy
 - c. it is, in fact, OK to not be happy when bad things happen
 - d. in at least one sense, happiness is a choice we make for ourselves

2. We talked about the need to get our perspective on right
 - a. how you look at things goes a long way to determining how you feel
 - b. for Christians, perspective is identified by at least three things:
 - 1) we walk by faith, not by sight
 - 2) seek things above, not things on earth
 - 3) make eternal things your goal

B. Being happy is very much about experiencing positive emotions¹

1. The benefits of experiencing happiness go far beyond merely "feeling good", and include a range of physiological and behavioral responses. For example, happiness energizes, motivates, and keeps us healthy by positively influencing our immune system.

2. While happiness comes in many shades and flavors, and despite the fact that we often use happiness as a catch-all term for all good feelings, happiness is in fact not the only game in town, when it comes to positive emotions. There exist other positive emotions that similar to happiness supply us with good feelings of their own, and cause behavioral responses that are quite distinct from happiness. One class of such emotions are the "other praising" emotions.

3. Positive emotions
 - a. "broaden one's perspective and motivate one to do things that will build skills or resources for the future".
 - b. In contrast, negative emotions generally "narrow and focus one's attention on the matter at hand to solve a problem".

4. The three major other-praising emotions that are currently being studied more intensively are "Elevation", "Admiration", and "Gratitude"

C. I think there are Bible teachings that encourage us toward these same things, and they are very much a part of our experience of happiness

¹ <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/evolved-primate/200911/beyond-happiness-other-praising-emotions>

I. TO BE HAPPY, LEARN HOW TO ELEVATE OTHERS

A. I mean by this that we must learn how to honor other people

1. In today's world, many people spend far too much time trying to get others to honor them
 - a. the problem is that some believe they deserve this honor just for breathing
 - b. this is the part of the "self esteem" movement that is more harmful than helpful, for it creates a sense personal entitlement that others should bow down before you
2. Here's a quote with a lot of truth, but with the potential for misuse
"Tell me how a person judges his or her self-esteem," says pioneering psychologist Nathaniel Branden, "and I will tell you how that person operates at work, in love, in sex, in parenting, in every important aspect of existence—and how high he or she is likely to rise. The reputation you have with yourself— your self-esteem—is the single most important factor for a fulfilling life."²
 - a. I believe in a good, healthy self-esteem
 - b. but one of the most detrimental things to ever happen to people today is the over-use of the idea to the point that we all get to thinking that we're the best thing to come down the road, and everybody else ought pay their respects to us
3. The problem is that it sets us up for a lot of unhappiness
 - a. if I believe I'm the greatest and you believe you're the greatest, who do you think I'm going to honor as the greatest – well, it won't be you!
 - b. you're likely be unhappy and I'm likely going to become both the source and target of your unhappiness, and that's likely to make me unhappy too

B. Instead, wouldn't it be great if we all learned to properly honor and respect one another – and it would help us all be happier people

1. Exodus 20:12— It begins in the home
12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you. — NAS
2. Romans 12:10— It extends to one another
10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; — NAS
3. Romans 1:21— It is at the heart of man's problem with God
21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. — NAS

² <http://www.scribd.com/doc/7670741/Dr-Nathaniel-Branden-Honoring-the-Self>

C. Elevating others produces happiness two different ways

1. Scientists are recognizing that by elevating others, we are producing good, positive feelings that contribute to our happiness
2. In a practical sense, when we all learn to elevate one another, to honor one another, then we all get the validation and encouragement we need

II. TO BE HAPPY, LEARN TO ADMIRE OTHERS

A. In an article titled, *Admiration of Others*, by Chuck Gallozzi

The admiration of others is a mark of maturity. When we are free of emotional baggage and in control of our lives, we come to accept, appreciate, and admire others. That's what I mean by saying, "We don't grow up until we look up to someone." But for those raised in a society, such as ours, where a preponderance of energy is spent berating, ridiculing, and criticizing others, it becomes increasingly difficult to learn the gentle art of admiration for others. Witness the late night comics that demean the highest office in the land. Witness the tabloids that proudly announce the latest scandal. Witness, too, radio talk show hosts and clerics that spew venom at those who disagree with them. If we are raised in mud, how can we avoid being covered in mud?³

B. World English Dictionary – to regard with esteem, respect, approval. . . .⁴

C. To admire others means we appreciate them, respect them, finding in them something we like or enjoy

1. But this require us to pay attention to other people rather than ourselves
2. When the focus is us, we can't see anybody else
 - a. I read something about what a person says by simply entering a room: the way they enter either says, "There you are," or it says, "Here I am"
 - b. I knew a guy in Air Force – no matter what anybody had done or accomplished, this guy had done it before and had done it better – we used to make up stuff just to hear him tell us how he'd already done it!
3. The Bible encourages us to be other-person centered

D. The "one-another" passages are all about admiring others, appreciating them,

1. Romans 15:7— Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. — NAS
2. Galatians 5:15— But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. — NAS
3. Ephesians 4:32— Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. — NAS

³ <http://www.personal-development.com/chuck/admiration.htm>

⁴ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/admire>

III. TO BE HAPPY, LEARN TO BE GRATEFUL

A. Gratitude is a lost art!

1. Article in USA Today

Perhaps Brad Morris' friends just weren't that thankful.

Sure, their marriage ceremony in Las Vegas went off without a snag.

Morris journeyed there from Frisco, Texas, and gave the couple, his pals from work, a generous gift: a crisp \$100 bill.

About a month later, he got an e-mail — a mass message from the bride's Yahoo account addressed "Dear friends," or some such. It thanked the group for attending the wedding and for "all the nice gifts," Morris recalls.

That was it — no monogrammed Crane stationery, no ballpoint pen

signature, not even a stamp. The e-mail was his thank-you note.

"It was cheap and pitiful," says Morris, 34. "I would just as soon have received no thank-you as to receive that."

In fact, that's what many generous Americans will receive during this season of giving: absolutely nothing in return.⁵

2. Do something good for somebody and too often you get anything but thanks

a. people seem to think you owe it to them

b. they think they deserve it

c. there is no, or little, appreciation for whatever is done or given to them

d. there is no sense of gratitude

3. Quote by Deborah Wadsworth

People do talk about a time in America when there was more respect and civility. How do we return to that kinder, gentler world? It will take both a significant individual and collective resolve to cure what has become an epidemic.⁶

B. The Bible teaches us to be grateful

1. Hebrews 12:28—

28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; — NAS

2. 1 Thessalonians 1:2—

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; — NAS

3. Whether gratitude to God or gratitude to one another, the ability to give thanks is an important element of our happiness

⁵ http://www.usatoday.com/life/lifestyle/2005-12-26-thank-you-notes_x.htm

⁶ http://books.google.com/books?id=06q9xNZmDpgC&pg=PA92&lpg=PA92&dq=whatever+happened+to+gratitude&source=bl&ots=yI819THh22&sig=gEe3dDd5ZWVp2RIFqVmgrGOkfLI&hl=en&ei=MsyPTPyKN5CosAPXwIGyDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=10&ved=0CDMQ6AEwCTgU#v=onepage&q=whatever%20happened%20to%20gratitude&f=false

CONCLUSION

A. These three powerful elements of happiness are in too short a supply

1. If you cannot elevate others, then you are most likely too focused on yourself
 - a. anybody who is focused on themselves is not likely very happy
 - b. learn how to honor others
2. If you think you're so great that you cannot admire others, then you're going to be frustrated when you discover aren't so wowed by you
 - a. but when you admire others, you recognize the talent, ability, courage, intelligence, wisdom, and more all around you
 - b. admiring others enables you to learn, grow, and become better yourself
 - c. it is an important element of happiness
3. If you're not grateful for what others do for you, then it's quite possible that you neither honor them, or admire them
 - a. your lack gratitude demonstrates a destructive focus on self
 - b. if you can't be grateful, you're probably not going to be happy

B. What amazes me is that modern psychology and science is discovering that common human qualities that produce happiness have been right there in the Bible all along

1. Elevate others, admire others, express gratitude – be happy
2. Pretty good prescription to me

C. Invitation