

Stewardship Series: More than Enough: Financial Wisdom, Courage, Peace

Sermon #3: “The Secret of Happiness”

Scripture: Philippians 4:11-12

Source: Rev. Adam Hamilton at the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, MO

<http://www.cor.org/worship/sermon-archives/show/sermons/The-Secret-of-Happiness/>

Book: *Enough* by Adam Hamilton

Scripture PP:

Philippians 4:11-12

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Reader: Philippians 4:11-12. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Video Clip: Opening video

PP#1: More than Enough: Financial Wisdom, Courage, Peace

“The Secret of Happiness”

“Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.” -Isaiah 55:2

More than Enough: Financial Wisdom, Courage, Peace. “The Secret of Happiness” -Isaiah 55:2, “Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.”

PP#2: *Image for spending, money and buying.*

We’re talking about money here in November. But there’s a bigger issue behind money. After all, money is just a tool. It’s buying power. The bigger issue is about *what* we buy, or perhaps, *why* we buy it.

We have needs, and money helps us provide those needs. But we want more out of our spending. We are looking for quality of life, for a way of life that delivers what we long for. We want our spending to bring well-being.

So, our series on financial peace is about the peace and well-being that can come from how we treat our finances, how we treat our spending.

PP#3: *Webshot of this page:* <http://www.positivepsychology.org/>

15 years ago there was new shift in human psychology. Usually we look at what’s wrong and try to fix it. Much of science and psychology is problem solving. Well, in 1998 there was a group

of psychologists who tried a different approach. Rather than focusing on what is wrong, they decided to focus on what is right. They took for their basis the study of when people get it right, when people are happy. Thus was born positive psychology.

PP#4: Happiness vs(?) Joy

Now many Christians—I being one of them—usually distinguish between joy and happiness. Happiness is a feeling, a temporary condition. Joy is a deep, underpinning foundation. Makes sense to me. But in the Bible, I don't find this clean separation. Often the two are used interchangeably, or they are found in the same contexts. Following God brings joy. Following God brings happiness. Somehow, scripturally, the two are linked. God wants us to be happy. God made us to be happy.

PP#5: *Image of someone excessively smiling, exceptionally happy looking.*

Doctors tell us that it is easier, muscularly, to smile than to frown. God want's us to smile! Perhaps the link is that real joy ought to have some shareable evidence on my face. If I am carried by joy, then somehow, I should reflect some contagious expression of that to the world. What good is joy if it doesn't lift me? Now, I know that you can be sad and still have joy. But there is something wrong with a joy-filled people who habitually look like their internet isn't working!

Happy people are healthier. 4,000 people were studied, aged 52-72, in London. They studied their physical health and emotional well-being over 5 years. In fact, they found that those who reported a higher quotient of happiness and well-being had a 35% less likely chance of dying early. Happy people live longer! Another study demonstrated that happy people were less likely to catch a cold. So, smile as you wash your hands!

Now, that makes our money question today: where do we find happiness?

What is fascinating is that the research of positive psychology is finding all kinds of insights that are scriptural. It's a new science, but they are discovering ancient truths.

PP#6: *Image for stuff doesn't satisfy.*

Big, ground-breaking conclusion published by positive psychology? Stuff doesn't fully satisfy us. Woa...stop the presses! I mean, we know this, don't we? And to tell you the truth, I'm probably not going to be saying anything today that you don't already know. This whole series on money, actually: you know all this stuff. But it is something that we need to keep coming back to, and relearn over and over again, so we can adapt them into our way of lives.

PP#7: "What is the one thing that makes you most happy?"

So, let's take a minute and share with your neighbor. What is the one thing that makes you most happy? Think about that a second, and share your answer with the person next to you. Try to give an honest answer. What is the one thing that makes you most happy? Go ahead.

[Pause...]

The Church of the Resurrection, a megga church in Kansas City, surveyed over 4,000 of their people, asking this same question, "What is the one thing that makes you most happy?"

PP#8: “What is the one thing that makes you most happy?”

1. My relationships
2. Serving others
3. My faith

90% of the answers fell into one of three categories: 1) Relationships with others, like my family, my friends, those I hang with. 2) Serving others, helping, doing things for others. That brings a deep sense of happiness. 3) My faith. Our connection to God, our relationships with Him, give great satisfaction and lasting sense of well-being. Notice that all the three top answers have to do with relationships...with others, through serving, with God. What is not on the list? Anything money can buy!

So, is this similar to what you shared? Now, there were a number of other miscellaneous answers to the question. The number 4 answer?

PP#9: “What is the one thing that makes you most happy?”

1. My relationships
2. Serving others
3. My faith
4. Chocolate!!

Chocolate!! OK, money can buy that!

The struggle we have is that our culture is not based on happiness. It’s a culture of materialism, right? It’s based on buying stuff. And to promote itself, the cultural teaching is that stuff will bring you happiness...so buy the stuff!

PP#10: The culture of lack: You need more!

We know in our heads that this isn’t true, but we get caught up into it. The world teaches that you have a need for more...you have a lack in your life. Fix it by buying something.

If I just had more...then I would be happy.

Income: If I just had more income, if I earned more.

Stuff: like that really cool car. Wouldn’t it be awesome to drive that car? What an experience!

Neighborhoods: Where we live, different neighbors, a different house.

Better friends: Ones that built me up, energized me, rather than are so draining and needy!

Different spouse: One that really meets my needs, fulfills me, gives me that lift.

Experiences: Getting to do amazing things, go amazing places, have more pleasure, having those *priceless* experiences...remember the commercials? For everything else there is MasterCard!

We know it really doesn’t work this way. Yes, more income will bring more happiness, if you are earning less than you need. Studies have shown, however, that above \$75,000 household income per year, increased income does not bring any increase in happiness.

Yes, stuff can bring short-term happiness, fun for the moment. Like chocolate. But the problem is the same. As soon as it’s gone, it’s over. In order to get that little emotional bump, you need more. But that more only brings more short-lived feelings, and then we’re looking for more again.

PP#11: *Images of a performing Michael Jackson and his Thriller album.*

Look at our idols: celebrities, rich people. They have it all, all the time. But that does not mean they have happiness. I grew up with Michael Jackson, one of the greatest performers of all time, incredibly talented, and successful. His *Thriller* album still is the top selling album of all time. He was hailed the king of pop. He had mansions, plural, even a personal amusement park. But he didn't have happiness...he didn't have a real sense of well-being. Like countless others, his is a tragic story.

PP#12: Ecclesiastes 2:9-11

9 So I became far greater than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Moreover, my wisdom stood by me. 10 I refrained from nothing that my eyes desired. I refused my heart no pleasure. Indeed, my heart found pleasure from the results of my hard work; that was the reward from all my hard work. 11 But when I surveyed all that my hands had done, and what I had worked so hard to achieve, I realized that it was pointless—a chasing after wind. Nothing is to be gained under the sun.

King Solomon, one of the guys who had it all, and then some, writes at the end of his life: Ecclesiastes 2:9-11. “So I became far greater than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Moreover, my wisdom stood by me. I refrained from nothing that my eyes desired. I refused my heart no pleasure. Indeed, my heart found pleasure from the results of my hard work; that was the reward from all my hard work. But when I surveyed all that my hands had done, and what I had worked so hard to achieve, I realized that it was pointless—a chasing after wind. Nothing is to be gained under the sun.”

PP#13: *Image of a '57 chevy*

The relative wealth of Americans has doubled since 1957. But you know what? There is no measurable increase in happiness!

So, let's hop in this 57 chevy and go find this happiness. It's not hard. It's all over the Bible. You've heard it many times before. You know this. So today I want to come at it a bit differently. I want to use the four secrets of happiness that positive psychology has identified, and we'll see how these are the biblical principles of happiness, of well-being.

PP#14: The 4 Secrets to a Life of Happiness:

“Why spend money on what...does not satisfy? Eat what is good.” -Isaiah 55:2

1. Relationships

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart...and You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.” -Matthew 22:37-40

The first secret of happiness: Your relationships. We learned this earlier, didn't we? It's a biblical idea. Love the Lord your God with all your heart...and love your neighbor as yourself.

This is one of the key things about church: it is a community seeking to follow Christ. We do it together. We try to build those meaningful relationships, caring for one another, sharing life together. That's a biblical purpose for church, and you need it!

So, the obvious question, then, is are you building those kinds of relationships? In your life, are you investing in relationships that build that well-being?

Remember the conclusions of the W.T. Grant study? You can have all the money in the world, but if you don't have people to share it with, you are the poorest person in the world. Isn't it getting about time for *It's a Wonderful Life* to start playing every day? It get's this right. Invest in building these meaningful relationships. This week, go out of your way to invest in a new relationship. Then do something once a week from now on, to keep cultivating it. OK? Write a name down after this point in your notes. Who are you going to build a relationship with?

PP#15: The 4 Secrets to a Life of Happiness:

“Why spend money on what...does not satisfy? Eat what is good.” -Isaiah 55:2

1. Relationships
2. Gratitude

“Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” -2 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The second secret of happiness, of well-being, is gratitude. People who have a grateful heart tend to be happier. Dr. Robert Emmons, a leading professor in positive psychology, wrote a book entitled, *Thanks!: How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier*. In the book, he told about a study he did. He randomly assigned people into three groups. The first group, at the end of each week, were to write down 5 things they were thankful for. The second group, at the end of each week, were to write down 5 things they were frustrated about. And the third group, the comparison group, were to simply write down 5 things that happened that week.

Well, after 10 weeks, he interviewed each individual. And he found amazingly that the group who wrote down what they were thankful for, demonstrated to be 35% more happy than those who wrote down 5 things they were frustrated about. They also reported sleeping better and having more energy throughout the day.

So, he took the next step and tested people with neuromuscular disorders, known to have chronic lack of sleep and achiness. But with them, he had them write down their five things every day. The results? Within 21 days, those who wrote down five good things started having measurable impressions of feeling better. They had a physical change resulting from their intentional attitude of gratitude.

Now, you learned this from your grandmother. Didn't she always tell you, “count your blessings”? It's true, and it's biblical. This is a fundamental orientation for humans in the Bible. God created us to dwell on thanksgiving. “Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

So, the obvious question is, how are you cultivating a heart of gratitude? Start on Thursday and list five things that you are thankful for. Then make that your weekly Thursday pattern. Cultivate a heart of gratitude. Thankful Thursdays! OK?

PP#16: The 4 Secrets to a Life of Happiness:

“Why spend money on what...does not satisfy? Eat what is good.” -Isaiah 55:2

1. Relationships
2. Gratitude
3. Acts of Kindness

“Those who pursue righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor.” -Proverbs 21:21

Third secret to happiness: doing acts of kindness to others. Don't these sound like the answers to the question earlier? Doing good things for others makes you happier!

Sonja Lyubomirsky wrote, *The How of Happiness* in 2008. Her studies concluded that our relative state of well-being is 60% based on things we cannot control, like our biological makeup and circumstances. But that means that 40% of our state of well-being we *can* control: based on factors we can change, how we choose to respond, and how we perceive things. She also conducted an experiment. She randomly assigned people into two groups. In one group each person was to do five acts of kindness each day. The other group didn't. And, you guessed it, those who did acts of kindness were measurably more happy, significantly.

The Bible calls this loving-kindness. In Hebrew it's *hessed*. It's a characteristic of God, and something God commands His people to do like Him. Micah 6:8, "He has told you, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace serving love, and walk humbly with your God." In the New Testament, the Greek translation for this word is charity, mercy, agape. It is a giving, sacrificing lifestyle that focuses on the other.

Neurologists document that when people do acts that help others, happy chemicals are released in the brain. It's a physical response. You can create a chemical buzz by doing good.

I think Mondays are a good day to intentionally do good deeds. Everyone is a bit down on Mondays. Imagine the good we can do, if we each commit to do 3 acts of kindness every Monday. You with me? Are you? Starting tomorrow!

PP#17: The 4 Secrets to a Life of Happiness:

"Why spend money on what...does not satisfy? Eat what is good." -Isaiah 55:2

1. Relationships
2. Gratitude
3. Acts of Kindness
4. Generosity

"Jesus said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" - Acts 20:35

The last secret of happiness, published by positive psychology, is generosity. Do you see how these four are actually all the same function? Generous in relationships, giving thanks, acting for others, and now, giving of your money. It's all generosity. It's all giving.

This is the antidote to our negative and selfish culture, to our destructive and depressing tendencies. It's counterintuitive: we get by giving. It's turning the direction around, away from us rather than towards us. We keep believing that happiness comes in the getting. And we try it over and over again. And it doesn't work any longer than chocolate! But it's too much effort to do it consistently. And so we keep doing what doesn't work. Isn't that the working definition of insanity? We keep doing the same thing hoping for different results?

Winston Churchill said, "You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give." He was just observing how God designed the world to work.

PP#18: "I will bless you . . . so that you will be a blessing." -Genesis 12:2

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good portion—packed down, firmly shaken, and overflowing—will fall into your lap. The portion you give will determine the portion you receive in return." -Luke 6:38

"What I mean is this: the one who sows a small number of seeds will also reap a small crop, and the one who sows a generous amount of seeds will also reap a generous crop."
-2 Cor. 9:6

“Those who give generously receive more, but those who are stingy with what is appropriate will grow needy.” Proverbs 11:24

God told Abraham, I will bless you with the purpose that you will then in turn be a blessing to others.

Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given to you. The portion you give will determine the portion you receive in return.”

Paul said, “The one who sows a generous crop will also reap a generous crop.”

Proverbs 11:24 sums it up, “Those who give generously receive more, but those who are stingy and give the minimum will grow needy.”

Well, there it is. Nothing fancy, nothing you didn’t already know. Now you just see that positive psychology has proven the Bible true.

But this truth only becomes meaningful if you apply it.

You want happiness? Then live by these biblical principles.

And it’s hard, because we tend to grow sticky fingers when handling money. Studies have also shown that the more money you have, the harder it becomes to give more away. John Wesley said, “Whenever I have money in my hand, I find a way to give it quickly away, lest it find its way into my heart.”

Let’s do that. From now on, make an intentional point to give a bit more than you think you ought, each time you give. Up it a bit. If you would normally throw in five, make it six. When the missionary comes, rather than \$20, make it \$25. Push it up. Top it off. Give a bit more. OK?

Now, the true key to happiness is having a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Without that, nothing else works. But when you have Jesus, then you are led to live differently. And here is the good part: you then have the Holy Spirit to help you make those changes in your life, and to continue to live differently. You have the Holy Spirit to help you do it. So, it can be done!

PP#19: The 4 Secrets to a Life of Happiness:

“Why spend money on what...does not satisfy? Eat what is good.” -Isaiah 55:2

1. Relationships
2. Gratitude
3. Acts of Kindness
4. Generosity

You can have this happiness! Choose Jesus. Then, once a week, do something to build a relationship. Who’s your name? Thankful Thursdays: keep listing 5 things you are thankful for every Thursday *after* Thanksgiving. Intentionally do at least three acts of kindness on Mondays, starting tomorrow. And generously give more money away. Make a decision to push it up each time you give.

Our God who created you for happiness, and who puts all kinds of money in your hands, asks a very important question: “Why buy bread that doesn’t satisfy?”

Amen.