

Happiness Unveiled

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An unexpected question presented itself to me. I was sitting in a room full of people, and conversations abounded, and the noise was cacophonous. The question leaped to my mind, and I could not shake it; I could not dismiss it; I could not quiet it; I could not escape it.

What is happiness? And if happiness is real and possible and definable, how will I know when I have arrived at happiness? What is happiness and how will I know if I am happy?

The dictionary defines happy in three ways: First, it is the feeling of pleasure and enjoyment because of your life, your situation. Second, it is the showing or causing feelings of pleasure or enjoyment. Third, it is being pleased or glad about a particular situation or event.¹

Here's my hang-up – happy, in the way the dictionary defines it is extremely situational. It is dependent upon one's circumstances or situations. Being happy (according to Merriam-Webster) is feeling joy about something that has happened. But for me, in my journey and my life right now, happiness is something different.

The question compels me to wonder what I consider happiness to be for my life.

Happiness is hidden, and must be sought.

Happiness in my life is not accidental. It doesn't just happen. Happiness is something that can be discovered. It may be hidden in the events of the day. It may be hidden in the people with whom I interact. It may be hidden in the experiences I have moment by moment.

It is there and only needs to be uncovered. It is present and only needs to be identified. It is active and only needs to be embraced. The work of my life is to uncover the happiness that is already present in my life and bask in the uplift that happiness brings.

Being happy is hidden but not elusive. It is available and ready to be discovered – but I search and seek. And in the seeking for joy, it will be found, discovered, relished and embraced.

Happiness is contextual, but also more.

Happiness is often connected to what is going on in my life. Circumstances can give rise to joy. Situations I encounter often result in the smile on the face. Experiences of life take place and brings opportunities to be happy and occasions to experience bliss.

But I also recognize that events occur that are not pleasant to my experience and often are not a foundation of joy for me. Illness strikes, cars break down, disappointments occur, arguments happen, and frustrations abound. When these things occur, happiness becomes elusive and illusory.

¹ Happy, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/happy>, accessed August 27, 2016.

However, happiness can still be found. In good and bad, in success and failure, in sickness and health, in abundance and poverty happiness can be discovered if only it is sought. I am discovering that happiness is not conditioned on my circumstances but rather dependent upon the attitude of my heart.

Happiness rises above the things of my life if only I am willing to see.

Happiness is conceptual, but also more.

Happiness is an emotional and psychological state of mind that is conceived in my heart. I have thought about what happiness is and had a sense of what it should be, what it could be, what I ought to feel.

But happiness is also more than emotions I can imagine. Happiness is more than the vision I have in my heart to feel good. Happiness is more than the concepts I have created in my mind – it is an emotional and spiritual state that is more than can be described in words. It is more than a concept, images, and thoughts.

Happiness is transcendent and will lift my spirit, my heart and my soul above the experiences of life. It will impart a contentment that goes beyond the moment.

Happiness is volitional, but also more.

Again, happiness is not accidental. It is the result of choice. Happiness is a choice, a decision, an act of volition that rises above the immediate, the contextual, the situational. Happiness is a state of mind which determines to find joy regardless of what is happening.

I choose happiness over sadness; I choose joy over being morose; I choose contentment over dissatisfaction. My happiness, my joy is something that I must decide – it won't just happen. I experience being happy when I have chosen happiness.

But is more than just my choice; it is something that occurs when I decide to be happy, but it is magnified, amplified and intensified and goes beyond the decision I make.

Happiness is possible, real and experiential and so much more.

I must confess that there have been so many times in my life that I thought that happiness was not a reality, and wasn't a possibility for me. And yet, in the opening of my eyes and mind, in the decisions of my heart, I am discovering that happiness is possible.

I know that happiness is real and something that I experience. It brings the lift to the daily steps; it gives the face a grin and smile. Happiness is experienced when I go to sleep at night with a sense of contentment. Happiness occurs when I feel peace in the midst of my life.

It is beyond description and words. Happiness is real and is real for me.

So the second question that arose in my mind (in the noise of the room) took the issue of happiness a step further: How will I know when I am happy?

I know I am happy when I experience the moment and don't need or want things to be different.

I know I am happy when I am content with what I have and forget that there may be a need in my life.

I know I am happy when I choose to see the blessings in my life rather than what is lacking.

I know I am happy when I experience the forgiveness and grace of the divine.

I know I am happy when I move beyond my shame and my guilt of my past and embrace a self-loving, self-gracious approach to my life.

I know I am happy when I approach my life with gratitude instead of expectation.

I know I am happy when I experience peace.

I know I am happy when I contribute my voice to the work of God in my life and join in His greater work in my life.

I know I am happy when I practice decisions to look beyond my circumstances.

I know I am happy when I choose happiness rather than dwelling in sadness.

I know I am happy when I wake in the morning and when I go to sleep at night if I have lifted my eyes above my circumstances and have seen the greater work of God in my life.

Happiness has been unveiled in my life. I have seen it; I have experienced it; I have felt it and embraced it.

Happiness is real and possible. I know it for I have experienced it.

And I will affirm today, even at this moment, I am happy, and I am choosing to be happy today!