

Guaranteed, Money-Back, Surefire Secret of Happiness!

If I were to tell you that I had a guaranteed, sure-fire method to find true happiness and that I would give you double your money back if it did not work, then how much would you be willing to pay for the secret? I'm thinking about starting an email business and recruit people to send out email messages. You've probably gotten some emails that look like this.

If you had to guess, what would you guess would be the percentage of people in the world who would say that they were "happy"? Would the percentage be any different for Kingsport versus, say, Chicago? Would it be any different for the rich versus the poor?

Maybe we should back up and, as a first step, answer the question of "what is happiness?" What would YOU say "happiness" is? It would likely be different than how your neighbor would define it. If a definition is what we need, then we can check out the word in the dictionary. This is what I found for the word

“HAPPY” Favored by luck or fortune.

I am still amazed that “being happy” has anything to do with luck. So I looked at some other words in the same area of the dictionary and found there is a word “hap.” It means “good luck.” That would fit in with the word “hapless” meaning “to have no luck.” That also fits in with the meaning of the word “happen” - to occur by chance.

Now, I have a real problem with my email business: How can I guarantee something that is controlled by chance? Maybe the Bible can give us some insight to being happy. I looked up the word “happy” in the Bible and found that it is used about 28 times in the KJV.

Both in the Hebrew and in the Greek, the words that are sometimes translated “happy” are most often (about 70 times) translated “blessed.” Maybe we are on to something: The secular world thinks that happiness is a result of chance and luck and the Biblical viewpoint is that happiness is a result of being blessed. To explain the difference all we need to do is to answer the question: “Where do blessings come from?” The answer to this question depends on your world view:

1. If you think that creation and everything that occurs was and is a result of some statistical probability rather than a deliberate act of a Creator God, then everything is a result of chance.
2. On the other hand, if we believe that a Loving God created everything that **IS** and that He is the Source of all our blessings, then we should be asking the question, “How can we be blessed by God?”

We can find the answer to that question. One of the more familiar passages in the Bible where the word "blessed" appears frequently is in the teachings of Jesus commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. What Jesus outlined that day to those people who were following Him is, in my estimation, that surefire, guaranteed method of finding true blessedness which is the source of happiness.

When we talk about the Sermon on the Mount, many people remember only the stark demands of "turn the other cheek" and "go the second mile"; however, this evening we want to examine what is referred to as the **Beatitudes** in which we find the prescription for success in life. Matt 5:1 ¶ And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

3 ¶ Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

MATTHEW 5:1,2 Why were there crowds following Jesus?

The news of the ministry of Jesus in healing the sick and casting out demons had gotten around and there were crowds of people who needed and were seeking help. They would gather around Him wherever He went. This provided Jesus with an opportunity to teach the people and especially those who were disciples of this new Teacher. Most of the people in the land where Jesus walked and taught were downtrodden, poor, and had little of the luxuries that we consider to be necessities in life. And yet, they were interested in finding a better life (happiness or blessedness) for themselves. So Jesus taught them how to live life successfully.

MATTHEW 5:3-4

It would appear that what we have here are couplets of "qualification requirements" and "fulfillment".

For example, the first beatitude gives the requirement of "poor in spirit" and the fulfillment of "the kingdom of heaven". It seems paradoxical that being poor in spirit is a qualification for finding happiness or being blessed. To better understand this, let's consider what is the opposite of being "poor in spirit." Turn to Luke 18:10&11

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

This is a picture of the opposite of being "poor in spirit."

We call it **pride** and the opposite is **humility**. However, "poor in spirit" communicates so much more than does the word "humility." **Poor** implies poverty – it implies being without the basic necessities. The truth of the matter is that all humanity (without God) is in spiritual poverty. However, not everyone realizes their condition. Realizing that we (in and of ourselves) are spiritual beggars leads to action and attitudes that we classify as humility. In other words, humility is an expression of a realization of being poor in spirit. Failure to realize our condition as spiritual beggars leads to pride.

Only those who realize that something is missing – that we are not fulfilled in our humanity, that we need to have the presence of God in our lives in order for us to be complete, only those will find true happiness. This happiness finds its consummation in the rule and reign of Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives which is the "kingdom of heaven." (Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.) If we are satisfied, or if we think that manmade remedies are the solutions to the problems of the world, then we will always be frustrated and continually chasing after rainbows (a euphemism for magical solutions or luck) – always looking for happiness, never finding it.

What do you think would be the response of a person who realizes his or her spiritual poverty? A realization of our spiritual condition should produce regret and sorrow and result in mourning over our situation. A person who mourns will literally cry out for help.

In verse 4, we see the promise that if we do cry out for relief and mourn because of our condition, then we will have help and be comforted.

The comforting starts when we hear the Good News that "God so loved the world that He

gave His only begotten Son., that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have eternal life.” Let’s assume that we have realized the poverty of our spiritual condition and have taken steps to invite Jesus into our life, making Him Lord. Having done this, we now have the peace of God that gives us the greatest comfort we can have: just knowing that we are in right relation to God.

Those who are familiar with various methods of presenting the Plan of Salvation to a lost person will recognize that the first two beatitudes are related to the initial step in a person coming to Christ for salvation.

The initial step is to realize that something is missing - that you have a spiritual need (poor in spirit) and then have a sense of needing help to the point of remorse and calling out for help (those who mourn).

Both these beatitudes relate to our relationship with God.

In **verse 5**, Jesus addresses our relationship with other people. How then shall we relate to others?

If being meek is to *have a tolerant, polite and tactful attitude toward others*, then it come from our sense of “well being and security” that we find in God’s protection and love. (That truth becomes clearer as we examine the nature of His protection and love.) Turn to Romans 8:31-39.

If we believe that is true, then there is no need to demand our rights, there is no need to demand our own way, and there is no need to try to prove anything in our relationship with others. This is the essence of MEEKNESS.

Meekness is the quality that allows a person to be in control of himself. It is “strength in submission to the will of God.” In that submission we are willing to suffer a wrong for Jesus. It is a choice we make. Can you see how meekness is a requirement for finding happiness and fulfillment and these are achievable in the here and now on the earth?

Poor in spirit (or humility) and meekness are characteristics that were demonstrated by Jesus: lowliness and meekness. Lowliness and meekness are not the same. For us, humility relates to our having a proper understanding of our own situation. We are finite and powerless to save ourselves. We are creatures and not the creator. We are totally reliant on the mercy of God even for our existence. Humility looks up into the sky and asks, “What is man that Thou art mindful of him?” Meekness, on the other hand, relates to the way we deal with others. It involves the ability to make others see themselves as worthwhile individuals and treats people as people and not as objects to be manipulated.

The consequences or outcome of being “meek” is that we will inherit the earth. Verse 5 is also found in Ps 37:11 “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” In the passage in Psalms, the implication and expectation of the descendants of Abraham (through Isaac) was to possess the promised land. The phrase “inherit the land” was a generally used expression that implied great blessings. [It is probable that its use here is a reference to the manner in which the Jews commonly expressed themselves to denote any great blessing. It was promised to them that they should inherit the land of Canaan. For a long time the patriarchs looked forward to this. They regarded it as a great blessing. It was what they talked about in the journey in the wilderness; and their hopes were realized when they took possession of the promised land. **In the time of Jesus people used “inherit the land” as a proverbial expression to denote any great blessing, perhaps as the sum of all blessings.**] (We could argue that “inherit the earth” means to receive and enjoy every earthly and spiritual blessing that is for our best good here, and that we will reign with Christ forever hereafter. Consequently, the sinful and lost condition of men need not hinder us from being truly and for ever blessed.) (Inherit the earth may simple be a reference to our reigning with Christ in His millennial reign on earth.)

MATTHEW 5:6-9

As Jesus continued in His teaching, He built up each new thought on the foundation of the previous thought. Realizing the poverty of spirit leads to sorrow that is expressed in mourning (first steps toward accepting God's salvation) which lead to such confidence in our relationship with God that we act with graciousness toward our fellow man. (Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they who mourn, blessed are the meek.) To put this into terms with which we are more familiar, we could say, "When we realize that we are lost and when we realize that we cannot save ourselves, we then turn in repentance to God and receive by faith His salvation in which we are born again and we then live above the pettiness of the world around us." That leads us to the next Beatitude.

(Verse 6) Our newly revived spirit needs to be nourished and this need is expressed as hunger and thirst for righteousness (what is spiritual food - that which leads to righteousness). Those who have not experienced the New Birth do **NOT** hunger and thirst for righteousness. Righteousness is simply a proper relationship to God and no one wants that for us anymore than God does. If we want it and seek for it, then we will find it. We cannot have true happiness without it.

(Verse 7) Somewhere along this journey we ought to realize that we did not do anything to deserve the blessings that comes from a restored relationship with God and we come to realize that it is possible only because of His **mercy**. Our response that leads us to experience more of this blessedness (of mercy) is to imitate God by our being merciful to others.

(Verse 8) The thing that caused a separation between God and man in the first place was that man sinned and since God is a Holy God, He cannot abide in the presence of sin. Therefore, if we are to have the indwelling presence of God in our lives, we must allow the Holy Spirit to do His work of purifying our hearts to take away our tendency (bent) to sin. The reward of such purity is that we will have a realization of the presence of God being near us and when all of life is through we will have the pleasure of coming before Him to be presented to Him with exceeding joy. (Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.)

(Verse 9) Now we don't want to keep all of this just to ourselves, therefore, we should share it with others. One of the ways that this happiness can be shared is in helping our fellow man to live peaceably with his neighbors as well as his enemies. The call to be a peacemaker goes out to everyone who has had an encounter with the Prince of Peace. Only the **child of God** can really be successful in doing this work because the starting point of peace between people is to have peace with God.

Not everyone will welcome our efforts. There will be resistance. (Look at the next verses.)

MATTHEW 5:10-12

Many messages from the Old Testament contained this teaching: "do what is right and you will prosper and be blessed." This is a general truth that is a "cause and effect" relationship in our dealings within our boundaries. This paradigm is where Job's friends were coming from. However, if we add in the spiritual dimension and the implications of eternity, we find that our world crosses with the world of the enemy -- the kingdom of darkness. When our orderly world intersects with the chaos of the kingdom of darkness, then we find that *good* is called *bad*, *evil* is called *good*, and things get twisted out of a logical context and become perverted. This may find expression in child abuse, drive-by shootings, terrorists attacks or acceptance of abortion or homosexuality. When we do that, we have a phenomenon such as Political Correctness being chosen over righteousness. Sometimes we are punished for doing what is defined as right by God. We are to remain faithful because the ultimate victory will see the demise of the kingdom of darkness and the blessings will come.

We can find satisfaction and true happiness in such situations knowing that we are doing what God wants us to do and that He will reward us either now or in eternity. Folks, we need to always remember that this life is preparation for eternity. We are here for just a moment, but eternity is

forever. That should help set our priorities!

(Time of Contemplation) We began by talking about a guaranteed, sure-fire method to find true happiness and that has a double your money back provision if it does not work. Why does it work? Because it is **God's** Plan of Salvation. The question asked at the beginning was, "How much would you be willing to pay to possess this kind of blessedness?" You say, "a lot!" There is a problem. It is not for sale, you can't buy it.

However, we can arrange some exchanges.

- You give God your life and He gives you His life.
- You give God your sins and He gives you His righteousness.
- You give God your anxiety and He give you His peace.
- You give up the low road and He sets your feet on the high road.
- You give up your will and your way and find delight in doing His will and walking in His way.
- You give up the kingdom of this world and He gives you the kingdom of Heaven.

The list goes on because you can never "out give" God. There are decisions to be made.

If you are not living the Exchanged Life, then NOW is the Day Salvation. If you have never made that decision, then you are risking eternity for the temporal. You will never find salvation by seeking it apart from God. If God is dealing with you in this matter, then you need to step out in faith and make a decision to become a child of God. There will be someone to council with you and pray with you if this is your need. When we stand up in just a minute or two, you make you way to the front and someone will help you.

You may have made a decision for Christ but have not gone on with Him in becoming all that He has for us as His children. If that is the case, then you are not living up to your potential and calling in Christ Jesus. You are missing out on the blessings that God wants to give you: (The kingdom, the comfort, the blessing of God's creation, the spiritual nourishment you need for growth, the joy that comes from being a channel of God's mercy, the ability to see the hand of God at work in your life and in the world, the confidence that comes from a continual knowledge that you are a child of God, and the joy of being in the will of God regardless of opposition.) You may want to come to the altar and do business with God tonight regarding this.

Some of you may need to make a decision to become part of this fellowship of believers and find a place of ministry. (You may want to move your letter from a church of like faith or come on statement of your having been born again.) Just be obedient to the Holy Spirit as God leads you.