

## **BOOKLET STUDY No.2**

By: Ray Ewart

# **TRUE HAPPINESS**

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**(WHAT IS IT? HOW DO YOU GET IT? HOW DO YOU KEEP IT?)**

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- Unless otherwise noted all quotations from Scripture are from the New King James Version.
- I often type words in capitals for EMPHASIS. You will notice it occurring in the expression of my own thoughts AND in quotations.
- All my comments and opinions are given from my viewpoint as a Christian who believes that the text of the Holy Bible, as originally given, is the Word of God. My opinions are based on my understanding of God's opinion as expressed in the Bible and I offer them with good intention without any will to cause offense to anyone holding a different opinion. They are offered in the hope of shedding light and providing help to anyone open to receive it.

□ The text of this booklet would be too lengthy if I typed out in full every Scripture referred to, but you will miss much of the message if you do not turn to, and read, each of the Scriptures concerned.

## TRUE HAPPINESS

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(WHAT IS IT? HOW DO YOU GET IT? HOW DO YOU KEEP IT?)

READ: Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew's gospel

Some subjects bring us encouragement, others are motivational and yet others are academic. This subject is, above all else, **CHALLENGING**. As I studied it I found myself examining my attitude to life and my commitment to serving the Lord. I believe it may do the same for you. Far from being merely academic, I have found it to be eminently **PRACTICAL**. It has caused me to ask myself how deeply peaceful I am. Have I, in Christ, found **TRUE HAPPINESS**? After all, Jesus promised His disciples **HIS PEACE** ("Peace I leave with you, **MY PEACE** I give to you" – John 14.27) and **HIS JOY** ("These things I have spoken to you, that **MY JOY** may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" – John 15.11).

There are many words that bring to mind the thought of wellbeing, contentedness and satisfaction. **HAPPINESS** is one of those words. The word suggests a state that is dependent on **HAPPENINGS** (if things are going well you will be happy and if they are not going well you will not be happy).

In the opening statements of 'the sermon on the mount' Jesus repeatedly uses the word **BLESSED**. One of the meanings the Oxford Dictionary gives to the word is 'HAPPY', yet Jesus said, "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5.11-12). So there is a **BRAND OF HAPPINESS** that does not depend on happenings (a brand of happiness that will stay with you even in adverse circumstances). Let me call this **TRUE HAPPINESS** and let us see if we can, from the teaching of Jesus in 'the sermon on the mount', discover:

□ **WHAT IT IS**

- HOW YOU GET IT, and, once you have got it,
- HOW YOU KEEP IT

When you study ‘the sermon on the mount’ as Matthew records it you discover that it is not just a series of thought-provoking, radical statements calculated to hold the attention of a crowd, but it is a **CAREFULLY CRAFTED SERMON** with:

- AN INTRODUCTION (5.3-12)
- A CENTRAL THEME (5.13-16)
- A BODY OF INSTRUCTION (5.17-7.23) and
- A CONCLUSION (7.24-27)

The **CENTRAL THEME** is of critical importance. The “multitudes” were flocking to hear Jesus (5.1) and they were “astonished at His teaching” (7.28) but it was “**THE DISCIPLES**” (5.1) who were to be “**THE SALT OF THE EARTH**” (5.13) and “**THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**” (5.14). It was to “**THE DISCIPLES**” that the **CHALLENGE** was made to, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (5.16). To them (**THE DISCIPLES**) a **REVELATION** was being given regarding **TRUE HAPPINESS**, a state of living that would enable them to meet the **CHALLENGE**.

As disciples of Jesus we need to learn the secret of **TRUE HAPPINESS**. The teaching Jesus gives in ‘the sermon on the mount’ shows us how we can attain true happiness and, by obedience to Him, avail ourselves of all of the benefits of the great salvation He has provided for us.

## **WHAT IS TRUE HAPPINESS ?**

If you were to ask people “**WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE YOU TRULY HAPPY?**” I think you would receive a variety of answers. Many would probably mention such things as good health, good family and friends and freedom, but some would say you need material wealth, possessions, power, fame or self-indulgence.

Scripture, however, tells us that ‘**MATERIAL THINGS AND EARTHLY ADVANTAGE**’ do not ultimately satisfy (“I have seen all the **WORKS** that are done under the sun, and indeed, all is **VANITY** and grasping for the wind” – Ecclesiastes 1.14) and **PHYSICAL EXPERIENCES**, no matter how pleasant, always leave you looking for more (“The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing” – Ecclesiastes 1.8). **There is a void in us that only God can fill!**

The writer of Ecclesiastes (Solomon), with all his wisdom, was on an intensive search for happiness (read verses 1 to 11 of chapter 2). He had almost unlimited opportunity to try everything, for he says “Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure (v.10). He tried “mirth” (vs.1-2), “wine” (v.3), “possessions” (vs.4-7), “silver and gold” (v.8), music (v.8) and fame (v.9) and nothing worked. He said at the end of it, “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labour in which I had toiled; and indeed **ALL WAS VANITY** and grasping for the wind. **THERE WAS NO PROFIT UNDER THE SUN**” (v. 11). That term “under the sun” is used repeatedly in Ecclesiastes. What it is saying is that **IF YOU LEAVE GOD OUT OF YOUR LIFE**, and look for meaning and happiness “under the sun”, you will end up unfulfilled and disappointed.

Many people, who have made it big in one way or another, have confessed to being disappointed. A few sayings, which I am told are attributed to famous people, indicate this, for example:

- Errol Flynn, the famous actor, is reported to have said, at the height of his career, “I am on a peak, but there is no mountain under it”
- Elizabeth Taylor, the famous actress, is reported to have said, “I have sold my soul to the devil”
- Winston Churchill, World War 2 Prime Minister of the U.K., is reported to have said, shortly before he died, “I am bored with it all”, and
- Steve Job, founder of ‘Apple’, is reported to have said, shortly before he died, “Death is very likely the single best invention of life”

In the **INTRODUCTION** to ‘the sermon on the mount’, as Matthew records it, Jesus uses the word “**BLESSED**” nine times and with each mention He gives us information to help us understand exactly what it is. The Amplified Version follows the word with a description of the sort of **HAPPINESS** this word describes. It reads, “**Blessed (HAPPY, TO BE ENVIED, AND SPIRITUALLY PROSPEROUS – WITH LIFE-JOY AND SATISFACTION IN GOD’S FAVOUR AND SALVATION, REGARDLESS OF THEIR OUTWARD CONDITIONS)**”.

**THIS IS TRUE HAPPINESS AS THE AMPLIFIED VERSION DESCRIBES IT!** I want to discover what it is from how the Lord describes it!

Before I do so let me point out AN ASPECT OF HAPPINESS that may not be fully understood. It comes out quite clearly in PSALM 1. The Psalm begins, “BLESSED is the man who”..... then, it describes that man by:

- what he DOES (v.1) – how he “walks”
- what he SAYS (v.1) - he is not “scornful”
- how he THINKS (v.2) - he “meditates” on God’s Word
- the COMPANY HE KEEPS (v.1) - he avoids the “ungodly” and “sinners”
- the ADVICE he accepts (v.1) - he will not take “the counsel of the ungodly”
- what his life PRODUCES (v.3) - fruitfulness
- his RELATIONSHIP TO GOD (v.6) –openness
- his STABILITY IN THIS LIFE, AND, HIS ETERNAL DESTINY (vs.4-6) – as compared to the “ungodly”

What comes across in this description is that BLESSEDNESS (true happiness) IS A **BY-PRODUCT OF A MANNER OF LIFE!**

The world is caught up in THE PUSUIT OF HAPPINESS, not realizing that the TRUE PURSUIT SHOULD BE FOR GODLINESS and true happiness will come naturally as a by-product. This will come out clearly as we study ‘the sermon on the mount’.

Consider **THE INTRODUCTION (MATTHEW 5.3-12)**

Jesus describes those who possess true happiness as being:

- “the poor in spirit” (v.3) The Amplified Version describes them as being **HUMBLE**
- “those who **MOURN**” (v.4)
- “the **MEEK**” (v.5)
- “those who hunger and thirst for **RIGHTEOUSNESS**” (v.6)

- “the **MERCIFUL**” (v.7)
- “the **PURE IN HEART**” (v.8)
- “the **PEACEMAKERS**” (v.9)
- “those who are **PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS**” (v.10)
- Those who are **REVILED, PERSECUTED AND SPOKEN AGAINST FOR CHRIST’S SAKE** (v.11)

You will immediately notice that every trait relates to THE MANNER OF LIFE of those who possess true happiness. This agrees completely with what we learn from Psalm 1. What you might not immediately notice is that the first eight of these nine traits is a list of THE CHARACTERISTICS SEEN IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST as He lived among us and the ninth refers to those who adopt those characteristics. Jesus was:

- **HUMBLE** “He HUMBLED Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2.8)
- **MOURNING** “He is despised and rejected by men, A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF” (Isaiah 53.3)
- **MEEK** “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am MEEK and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11.29). The KJV uses the word “meek” while the NKJV uses “gentle” in the text and gives “meek” as the alternative (in the margin).
- **RIGHTEOUS** God the Father, through God the Spirit, refers to Jesus as “My RIGHTEOUS servant” (Isaiah 53.11)
- **MERCIFUL** Jesus is our “MERCIFUL and faithful High Priest” (Hebrews 2.17)
- **PURE IN HEART** It is written of Jesus that He is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”
- A **PEACEMAKER** Jesus is the Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9.6) He “is our peace” (Ephesians 2.14). He “abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances,..., thus MAKING PEACE” (Ephesians 2.15)

☐ **PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS** Who can compare with Jesus in this regard, for He “suffered once for sins, THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3.18)

**THOSE WHO WILL EXPERIENCE TRUE HAPPINESS ARE THOSE WHO MODEL THEIR LIFE ON JESUS CHRIST.** The ninth statement confirms it for Jesus said, “BLESSED are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely FOR MY SAKE” (Matthew 5.11). When you are a true, close follower of Jesus Christ you will face opposition. Paul tells Timothy, “ALL who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will SUFFER PERSECUTION” (2 Timothy 3.12). It is worth it, for you will have found TRUE HAPPINESS.

Having discovered WHAT TRUE HAPPINESS IS (**THE BY-PRODUCT OF MODELLING YOUR LIFE ON JESUS CHRIST**) you will find many Scriptures inviting you to make Jesus your example. Scriptures like:

☐ **“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, LEAVING US AN EXAMPLE, THAT WE SHOULD FOLLOW HIS STEPS” (1 Peter 2.21)**

☐ **“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2.5)**

☐ **“Take My yoke upon you and LEARN FROM ME” (Matthew 11.29)”**

☐ **“He who says he abides in Him ought himself to WALK AS HE WALKED” (1 JOHN 2.6)**

And each is an extension of what Jesus meant when He said, **“FOLLOW ME”** (Matthew 4.19).

Another thing worth noting is the TRUE HAPPINESS is **FUELLED BY FAITH**. There are rewards for it here and now through its links with such things as SATISFACTION, PEACE and SENSE OF PURPOSE, but **THE TOTALITY OF IT’S REWARDS LIE IN THE FUTURE.**

Jesus said, in the INTRODUCTION that those who have this true happiness **SHALL:**

☐ **be comforted (v.4)**

☐ **inherit the earth (v.5)**

☐ **be filled (v.6)**

☐ **obtain mercy (v.7)**

□ **see God (v.8)**

□ **be called sons of God (v.9)**

**Jesus said BEFORE AND AFTER these assurances, “theirs is the kingdom of God” (vs. 3 and 10). He confirmed this aspect of the rewards as He said, “GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN” (v.12).**

TRUE HAPPINESS is worth having, so the next important question is:

## **HOW DO YOU GET IT ?**

As Jesus preached this sermon He made it clear that there is a deep division running through humanity. People are identified by all sorts of criteria. There are the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, the Jew and the Gentile, the free and the bond, etc. but **THERE IS A CLASSIFICATION THAT OVERRIDES ALL OTHER DIVISIONS.** Jesus referred to it as He ended this sermon. He divides people into **THE WISE and THE FOOLISH** (Matthew 7.24-27).

## **TRUE HAPPINESS IS ONLY AVAILABLE TO THE WISE!**

**We can say with total certainty that the obtaining of true happiness has TWO STAGES: STAGE 1 is an EXPERIENCE (you need to become a ‘born again’ believer in Jesus Christ)**

**STAGE 2 is a PROCESS (you need to model your life on Jesus Christ)**

Let’s look at these two stages!

### **STAGE 1**

Jesus spoke about “the way that leads to destruction” and “the way which leads to life” (Matthew 7.13-14). The way to which leads to life is “narrow” and “difficult” and you have to “find” it, but the way to destruction is “broad” and all you have to do is “go” and you will end up there. We are born on the road to destruction. The psalmist said, “I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51.5). All we need to do is ‘keep on going’, without any change, and we end up in destruction. If we are to enter the road to life a



change has to occur. Only God can make that change for us but we need to come to Him to receive it.

It is spoken of in several ways, but they all mean the same thing. It is the **EXPERIENCE** we can refer to as:

□ being 'SAVED'. **God the FATHER** says, "Look to Me, and be saved" (Isaiah 45.22) for "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2.9). It was God the Father who sent His SON to die for us (John 3.16-17).

□ being 'BORN AGAIN'. This is the work of **God the SPIRIT** (John 3.1-8) and it occurs when we "receive" Jesus Christ (John 1.11-13).

□ being 'CONVERTED' (Acts 3.19) but it can only come through the saving work of **God the Son** (Acts 4.12)

ALL THREE PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD were, and are, involved in providing our salvation.

But this is the **FIRST** step and the **ONLY** way to have any hope of having true happiness. It is **AN EXPERIENCE YOU MUST HAVE AND IT IS ENTIRELY OF, AND BY, THE GRACE OF GOD** (Ephesians 2.8-10).

Jesus said, in this sermon, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (6.33), "Enter by the narrow gate" (7.13) and "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (7.21).

## **STAGE 2**

The 'sermon on the mount' is full of instruction and information for the true disciple of Jesus Christ. As we have seen, **THE INTRODUCTION** draws our attention to the qualities of character displayed by Jesus Christ. Modelling your life on Him is a **PROCESS** that takes time. As you learn to "walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5.16), and submit yourself to obedience to the Word of God (John 14.23), you see the Lord's qualities of character emerging in your own life.

There are several passages in the Scriptures that help to make this process clear. The two passages mentioned below are particularly helpful:

1. 2 Peter 1.1-11

In this passage Peter makes the process clear that:

- It is for “those who have obtained like precious faith” (v.1). It is for true believers like PETER himself.
- Everything accomplished in the process is wrought by the power of God. “His DIVINE POWER has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (v.3).
- Fulfilment of God’s “exceedingly great and precious promises” make us “PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE” (v.4).
- We need to avail ourselves of the resources God has provided for verse 5 says, “GIVING ALL DILIGENCE, add to your faith”
- .
- Verses 5 to 7 set out the PATHWAY FOR GROWTH (“add to your FAITH” – VIRTUE/KNOWLEDGE/SELF-CONTROL/PERSEVERENCE/GODLINESS/BROTHERLY KINDNESS/LOVE).
- Having travelled this path you become “FRUITFUL” (v.8) and we know that “the fruit of the Spirit is”, among other things, “JOY” and “PEACE” (Galatians 5.22) (essential characteristics of TRUE HAPPINESS).
- MAINTAINING this condition means that “YOU WILL NEVER STUMBLE” (v.10) – and this does NOT mean you reach a state of sinless perfection, for that is an impossibility this side of eternity (1 John 1.6-2.1).

## 2. Romans chapters 6 to 8

In these chapters we are taken from OUR BATTLE WITH SIN (6.1) to being “MORE THAN CONQUERORS” (8.37) as we learn to WALK “ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT” (8.1).

Paul makes it PERSONAL to himself. He says in chapter seven, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (v.14) and “the good that I will to do, I do not; but the evil that I will not to do, that I practice” (v.19) and “O wretched man that I am! WHO WILL DELIVER ME from this body of death? I thank God - through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD!” (vs.24-25).

Paul’s struggle, which is common to all of us, is why Jesus said the narrow way is “DIFFICULT” (Matthew 7.14).

The BODY OF INSTRUCTION in the sermon (Matthew 5.17-7.23) takes you through an amazing selection of challenging situations in life. At each Jesus shows us how to respond. We will briefly survey these

situations in the next section of the study. Suffice to say at this point that obedience to the Lord's instructions is the key to enjoyment of true happiness.

Having learned what true happiness is, and learned how to get it, let us proceed to the third question.

## **HOW DO YOU KEEP IT ?**

Life is full of challenges. In 'the sermon on the mount' Jesus gives advice and instruction to His disciples on how to respond to these challenges in such a way as will enable them to maintain true happiness. As I survey the selection of challenges the Lord raises in the sermon I will only make brief comments. Each challenge deserves deep study, but I will leave that for you to do in your own time. That is how you will receive maximum benefit.

As I do this survey I have listed, chronologically, the subjects the Lord deals with and in a way that suits the message I am seeking to get across. You might divide the sermon differently.

Consider **THE BODY OF INSTRUCTION (Matthew 5.17 – 7.23)**

□ The first challenge Jesus talks about is **OUR RESPONSE TO HIS WORD (5.17-20)**

God's Word (the Bible) is eternal (v.18). "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119.89). We are extremely privileged to have this revelation from God. You are not to tamper with God's Word (v.19). The scribes and Pharisees DID tamper with it. We have to do better than that! God's Word is there for our guidance and our obedience. Responding faithfully to its guidance and commands is essential to maintaining true happiness ("Great peace have they that love Your law, and NOTHING CAUSES THEM TO STUMBLE" – Psalm 119.165).

□ The next challenge He addresses is **HOW YOU RELATE TO PEOPLE (5.21-32)**

Whether it is your "brother" (vs.22-24), your "adversary" (vs.25-26), members of the opposite sex (vs.27-30) or your spouse (vs.31-32) there is guidance in the Word of God for how you should behave, and there are consequences for departing from God's instructions.

□ Jesus then talks about **THE LANGUAGE WE USE (5.33-37)**

The instruction could not be clearer, “let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No’, ‘No’. Whatever is more than these IS FROM THE EVIL ONE” (v.37)

□ The next subject is **DEALING WITH EVIL** (5.38-48)

One of the critical lessons to learn, as an individual believer, is that you do not need to seek revenge (vs.38-39). It is different for governments. They need to administer justice for the sake of law and order (Romans 13 1-7) and that requires them to take revenge, but for the individual this is not the case. We are assured that God will one day balance everything up . No one will get away with anything! “Vengeance is MINE, I WILL REPAY, says the Lord” (Romans 12.19), so we are able to “live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12.18). This is of immense help when we are dealing with undisciplined and unreasonable people (vs.39-48).

□ The Lord then talks about **HYPOCRISY** (6.1-18)

Jesus has a great deal to say about hypocrisy, for there is a lot of it abroad. Whether it is charitable deeds (vs.1-4), prayer (vs.5-15), fasting (vs.16-18) or any other activity you are involved in, for the benefit of your fellow man or your service to God, it should be done in sincerity and humility.

□ The next subject Jesus addresses is **MATERIALISM** (6.19-21)

The things of this world do not last. We are always in danger of losing them (v.19) and one of the important lessons is that being too attached to them affects the condition of your heart. That affects your whole life (v.21 + Proverbs 4.23, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life”).

□ Jesus then talks about **ATTITUDE** (6.22-34)

Of all the senses, sight provides you with the most information. As you take in information with your eyes you deal with it according to your attitude (vs.22-23). Your attitude determines the direction of your life. You will serve either God or mammon (v.24). Mammon is whatever you put in place of God. Jesus tells you to serve God, fully trusting Him in a manner that dispels all “worry” (vs.25-32). Becoming a citizen of “the kingdom of God” and having “HIS righteousness” imputed to you (v.33) renders you able, by God’s grace, to meet the challenges each day brings (v.34) in a state of peace.

□ We are then told that **WE SHOULD NOT BE JUDGEMENTAL** (7.1-5)

Being judgemental is a form of hypocrisy (v.5). Our brother's faults can tend to appear to us to be bigger than they really are, whilst we run the danger of minimising our own faults (v.3).

□ We are told to **USE DISCRETION** (7.6)

If we are to maintain our experience of true happiness we need to be wise custodians of holy and precious things. Wise people know when to speak and when to be silent, what to be involved in and what to avoid (Proverbs 9.7-9).

□ Jesus then addresses the subject of **PRAYER** (7.7-11)

Prayer is an immensely important occupation and resource for maintaining a good level of relationship with God. How can you expect to receive if you do not ask (vs.7-8)? It works at human level so it will most assuredly work in our dealings with God (vs.9-11).

Jesus emphasises the need for **PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER**. "ASK" could be rendered "KEEP ON ASKING". This comes out more clearly in Luke's record of the same advice. (Luke 11.1-13).

□ Jesus then gives them the golden rule of **TREATING OTHERS THE WAY YOU WOULD LIKE THEM TO TREAT YOU** (7.12)

This rule needs no explanation.

□ And He finishes emphasizing **THE NECESSITY OF BEING GENUINE** (7.13-27)

Each one of us needs to be genuine. There is no way to "LIFE" other than by the "NARROW GATE" and the "DIFFICULT WAY" (vs.13-14). "False prophets" will be exposed by their evil "fruits" (vs.15-20). False professors will be exposed by their "lawlessness" (vs.21-23). No false person will fail to be exposed by the all-seeing, all-knowing God (Hebrews 4.13). And it goes without saying that no false person, regardless of their religious activities (v.22) can experience true happiness, for "There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked" (Isaiah 57.21).

This takes us to the Lords closing statement:

## **THE CONCLUSION (Matthew 7.24-27)**

Jesus said, **“THEREFORE”** (v.24), on the basis of all of this, **there are ONLY TWO POSSIBILITIES, either:**

**1. YOU OBEY HIS INSTRUCTIONS (which means you are “WISE” and you will survive the coming judgement – vs. 24-25).....or,**

**2. YOU IGNORE HIS INSTRUCTIONS (which means you are “FOOLISH” and you will be condemned at the coming judgement – vs. 26-27)**

**AND the “WISE” who model their lives on HIM will, through the period of their life of service here on earth, experience TRUE HAPPINESS!**