

 Jesus is the way to everything that is important and worthwhile. As we have already seen, Jesus is the way to truth, the way to victory over sin and death, the way to God, the way to Heaven, and the way to a better life. Now, we need to recognize that Jesus is the way to a joyful life (John 14:6). Everyone wants to be happy and experience true joy in their lives. But, many look to physical things to find such (i.e. money, possessions, relationships, substances, etc.) and spend their lives chasing after the next thing necessary to be happy (Ecclesiastes 2:1). However, the happiness and pleasure most people pursue is based on an emotion that is dependent on your conditions in life (which are always changing). Rather than chasing after such, you need to unlock the secret to true and lasting joy that is not dependent on your earthly conditions!

 The purpose of this lesson is to learn that worldly things don’t produce true joy, that Jesus does produce true joy, and to better understand what the joyful life looks like.

**Worldly Things Don’t Produce True Joy**

 **Worldly things produce temporary pleasures.** Earthly things do produce temporary pleasures (Hebrews 11:25). But, they are fleeting pleasures. Moses recognized there was something else much greater than temporary sources of happiness (Hebrews 11:26)! Sadly, many people never wake up and recognize that the physical pleasures that produce momentary happiness are not the same as lasting and true joy! So, they live their entire lives chasing the next pleasure, to experience the next emotion or feeling of happiness.

 **Worldly things don’t satisfy.** While worldly things produce temporary experiences of pleasure that lead to feelings of happiness at times, they cannot and do not fully satisfy! For, a constant feeling of happiness simply does not exist, because life is far from perfect! Even those with great riches, earthly standing, earthly pleasures, etc. are often the most unhappy people on this earth and still experience the pains and hardships of this life. In fact, pursuing feelings of happiness through worldly pleasures results in chasing after something you will never catch (Ecclesiastes 5:10)! And, these things often even cause trouble (1 Timothy 6:9-10)!

 **Worldly things don’t last.** Even if worldly things actually produced the kind of pleasure people hope they will produce and you could experience a continual feeling of happiness throughout your life because of them, they are still things that will be taken away from you at death! This should terrify you at the thought of being separated from the things that make you happy! Think about King Solomon, who had it all from a worldly perspective. Yet, listen to his conclusion in Ecclesiastes 2:9-11. Even he was not truly happy and recognized that trying to find joy through worldly things was like trying to catch the wind (an impossibility). He knew death was approaching and would be the end of experiencing any kind of happiness through these worldly things. This is similar to the man in Jesus’s parable in Luke 12:16-21. Everything he had put his trust in was taken away from him at death. One day, you will also die. And, if you have pursued happiness through physical things, your happiness will also be gone (1 Timothy 6:7)!

**Jesus Produces True Joy**

 **Passages connecting joy with following Jesus Christ.** First, consider John 17:13, which identifies joy available through Jesus that is given to those who are faithful to Christ, despite the fact these are hated by the world and the devil had his sights set on them. Second, consider Acts 2:46-47, which describes Christians as having joyful hearts after they had been baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and were now in a saved condition. Third, consider Acts 8:39 and Acts 16:34, which describe two people rejoicing after being baptized into Christ and entering saved conditions. Fourth, consider Romans 12:12, which demonstrates that Christians can rejoice in the hope of eternal life in Heaven even when our earthly circumstances are difficult. You see, there is no mistaking the point from the Scriptures that those who live for Jesus Christ can experience true joy (1 Thessalonians 5:16; Philippians 4:4; Galatians 5:22-23).

 **Following Jesus results in great treasure.** Rather than being an emotion that comes and goes, true joy is rooted in much deeper realities that never change. This kind of true joy should be the way of a Christian’s life rather than moments of certain emotions or feelings. The parable Jesus taught in Matthew 13:44 contains the pieces we need to properly understand the joy that is available in Jesus Christ.

 First, consider the treasure. It is the opportunity to be part of the kingdom of Heaven. The blessings of being citizens in this kingdom are spiritual and eternal rather than temporary (hope, forgiveness, peace, etc., Ephesians 1:3). So, no matter how your life goes on earth, these spiritual blessings never change as long as you are faithful to Christ – and will culminate in an eternal home in Heaven (1 Peter 1:8-9; Revelation 21:1-22:5)!

 Second, consider the one who finds the treasure. This person can be you – if you will listen to the gospel’s message! Hearing this message of salvation will leave you with a couple options. Either you will believe and obey it or you won’t. Hopefully, you will be like the man in the parable and rejoice that you have found the wonderful blessings God has provided through Jesus Christ and do everything God requires of you.

 Third, consider that the sacrifices made were well worth it. The man in the parable sold everything he had to buy the field; yet did it joyfully because he knew the value of the treasure! Certainly, the cost of being a disciple of Jesus is high and will cost you everything since you will devote your entire life to following Him. And, it will include hardships and persecutions associated with following Jesus. But, it will produce a true joy that far surpasses the cost!

 **True joy through Jesus is not dependent on your earthly circumstances.** While worldly things and pleasures produce temporary feelings of happiness that fade away and will never last, the joy available through Jesus is far different in that it is not dependent on your earthly circumstances! For example, Acts 5:41 records that the apostles rejoiced, even though they had just been severely flogged. Philippians 4:4 records Paul’s instruction for Christians to rejoice, even though he was being held as a prisoner for serving Jesus. Then, 1 Peter 1:6-7 records instructions to Christians about rejoicing even though they must go through various trials. Therefore, Christians can experience true joy in Christ even when their earthly circumstances are far from being ideal. For, nothing and nobody can rob you of the joy He provides. Christians simply know everything will work out for their spiritual good (Romans 8:28)!

**A Look At The Joyful Life**

 **Matthew 5:3-12.** This section is often referred to as the “Beatitudes.” In it, Jesus gives us multiple pictures of what true blessedness looks like. Interestingly, this word that is translated “blessed” also can mean “happy.” But, Jesus describes the blessed life in ways that are contrary to how we typically picture the blessed life! For, Jesus describes the blessed life as being poor in spirit, mourning, being humble, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, being pure in heart, being peace makers, and being persecuted for righteousness’ sake. Yet, to these, Jesus promises the kingdom of Heaven is theirs, they will be comforted, they will inherit the earth, they will be filled, they will be shown mercy, they will see God, they will be called the sons of God, and their reward in Heaven is great!

 **Luke 11:28.** True blessedness and joy is not found by just hearing the gospel. Rather, it can only be found through hearing and obeying what God’s word says (James 1:25). If you do this, you can be happy, knowing that God is pleased with you and you will have Heaven as your eternal home!

 **Acts 20:35.** While most think of happiness as coming through receiving, Jesus teaches blessedness through giving! So, you must be willing to give yourself physically and emotionally to serve and help others in both physical and spiritual ways. If you do this, you can be happy, knowing that God is pleased with you!

 **James 1:2-4, 12.** While we would all prefer not to experience hardships in life, going through them results in blessings. For one, if you are faithful to God through them, you can find joy knowing the trials will help you become stronger in the faith – and that Heaven will be your eternal reward!

**Conclusion**

 Jesus is the way to a joyful life! No, following Jesus does *not* mean that you will never experience feelings of sadness on this earth. However, your life will be joyful by serving Jesus Christ because you can always rejoice in the fact that God is pleased with you, that He has given you wonderful spiritual blessings, and that those who die in the Lord are the happiest people of all because they will live eternally in Heaven (Revelation 14:13)!

**Discovering God’s Word Bible Study Series**

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