

Joy for the Journey (1)- It's Not About Me

I. Introduction

- A. Philosopher John Locke said one of the founding tenets of government is this—
No one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.
1. It's the job of government to protect the people from having rights abridged
 - a. It is even more critical that government not be used to abridge these rights
 - b. Thomas Jefferson was largely echoing Locke when he wrote this—
We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness
 2. Founding document says we have the divine right to pursue happiness
 - a. And we pursue that divine right with just about everything we have
 - b. An article in *NY Times* in 2005—we spend \$704 billion on entertainment
 - 1) That's more than on gas, furniture, clothing and charitable giving
 - 2) We spend more on entertainment than anything but food and shelter!
 - c. We spend more on entertainment than the total GNP of Canada
 3. Americans take rights seriously, especially the right to pursue happiness!
- B. Article in *The American* by Arthur Brooks titled “*Can Money Buy Happiness?*”
1. In 1972, a study determined that 30 percent of Americans were very happy
 - a. Wealth has skyrocketed (50%+), but not happiness (still hover at 30%)
 - 1) Compare that with Mexico that using the same measure is at 63%
 - 2) Money buys more happiness only in countries in abject poverty
 - b. Brooks does believe that capitalism's values— honesty, fairness, work do set the stage for us to find happiness (*those really capitalistic values?*)
 - c. But he warns that more money and things rarely lead to happiness
 2. Today we begin a new study series that I'm calling *Joy for the Journey*
 - a. We will contrast the happiness of our me-first world with God's true joy
 - b. God promises us a deep, abiding joy able to transcend all circumstances
 - 1) Bible talks about joy made complete ([Jn 17:13](#); [Phil 2:2](#); [1 Jn 1:4](#))
 - 2) This complete joy can come only from God Himself ([Rom 15:13](#))
 - c. If we're to know this complete joy, we must rethink view of happiness

II. Joy for the Journey: It's Not About Me

- A. We generally make two mistakes when we are thinking about happiness
1. **First**, we usually see happiness through prism of what's happening now
 - a. We're happy if circumstances are good... and unhappy if they aren't
 - 1) Remember Ahab when Naboth refused to sell vineyard? (**1 Ki 21:4**)
 - 2) What was happening was so he wasn't happy ("*sullen*" or "*bitter*")
 - 3) Do we seem this childish & self-centered when we don't get our way?
 - b. We're unhappy if what's happening is bad. So what do we do?
 - 1) We change what's happening-- shop, comfort food, entertainment
 - 2) Is that always wrong? No, but don't confuse that with happiness!
 2. **Second**, happiness is what's happening **with me**— *happy is all about me*
 - a. We receive joy from serving God and others, but happy is pretty selfish
 - b. Ever say, "*I hope you're happy!*" No you don't! You want to be happy
 - 1) What if today everything is great for everyone in world... *except you?*
 - 2) You'd probably feel unhappy (*maybe more so because you're left out*)
 - c. So our gauge of happiness is flighty (*changes with what's happening now*)
 - d. It's also pretty self-centered and self-absorbed—*it really is all about me*
- B. **Shocking Factoid:** God seems *distinctly disinterested* in you being happy
1. Jefferson said God gave us inalienable right to be happy, not the Bible
 - a. There is nothing in the Bible that says that God wants us to be happy
 - b. Sure, the Bible has a lot to say about joy— God wants us to be joyful
 2. Read the Bible and you suspect God has something totally different in mind
 - a. **Matthew 5:12**- We are to rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted
 - b. **2 Corinthians 8:2**- Macedonians had joy in their severe poverty
 - c. **James 1:2**- We count it as joy when we suffer hardships or trials
 - d. **Hebrews 12:2**- Jesus endured the cross "*for the joy set before Him*"
 3. The Bible's joy flourishes even when what's happening now is painful
 - a. Bible doesn't say that persecution, poverty or pain are good things
 - b. But it does insist that with and in God, we can be joyful despite them!
 - c. Joy isn't about what's happening now and it certainly isn't about me

III. The Lie of Self-Image

A. The word on the street is that to be happy, we need to focus more on SELF

1. Whitney Houston's signature song is entitled "*The Greatest Love of All*"

Because the greatest love of all is happening to me

I found the greatest love of all inside of me

The greatest love of all is easy to achieve

Learning to love yourself, it is the greatest love of all

- a. The greatest love is learning to love self? It all start with ourself?
- b. After all, we'll never truly learn to be happy until we love ourselves
 - 1) Even the Bible say "*love your neighbor as yourself?*" (**Lk 10:27**)
 - 2) Doesn't that mean that we must love ourselves to love others?

2. We aren't happy because we don't have proper **self-image** and **self-esteem**

- a. **Self-Image** is basically how we see or what we think about ourselves
 - 1) This begins to be shaped in early childhood from input of other
 - 2) It is molded by experiences & gradually becomes our picture of self
 - 3) This picture can be greatly distorted and this can cause us problems
- b. **Self-Esteem** is based on self-esteem and is how we feel about ourselves
 - 1) If see ourselves (self-image) as failure, that's how we feel about self
 - 2) We may become successful, but that old low self-esteem still be there
 - 3) Problems with self-esteem can lead us to act in inappropriate ways

B. I'm not suggesting issues of self-image and self-esteem aren't important

1. But they aren't the cause of all of all of our ills—which is often suggested

- a. Bad choices that lead to unhappiness are all because of low self-esteem
- b. Here's how one supposed expert states it... or rather overstates it

I cannot think of a single psychological problem—from anxiety and depression, to fear of intimacy or of success, to spouse battery or child molestation—that is not traceable to the problem of poor self-esteem

2. Experts are rethinking this notion of self-esteem as psychological panacea

- a. One California study showed many child abusers have high self-esteem
- b. Another study show violent offenders often have an inflated self-image
- c. Bullies act the way that they do because of unearned high self-esteem

3. Maybe we don't found lasting happiness if we focus too much on SELF!

IV. The Bible and Self-Image

- A. **Fact:** Bible never warns about not having good self-image or self-esteem
1. In fact, the warning in the Bible are generally of just the opposite issue
 - a. It does warn us not to think too highly of ourselves (**Rom 12:3**)
 - b. It does warn us not to think only about ourselves (**Phil 2:2-3**)
 - c. It does emphasize that we are to practice control ourselves (**Acts 24:25**)
 - d. And it even stresses that we are to deny ourselves (**Luke 9:23**)
 2. Lasting happiness will never come when we focus only/mainly on SELF
 - a. When we focus on self, then we want to be gratified and satisfied
 - b. That's why we're not happy— SELF can't be gratified or satisfied long
- B. Paul warns of “*terrible times in the last days*” (**2 Tim 3:1**). *Apply to Timothy and us*
1. Notice Paul's focus on self in his description of bad times (**2 Tim 3:2-5**)
 - a. He begins by saying people will be lovers themselves (*money & pleasure*)
 - b. He contrasts that with them not being lovers of good or lovers of God
 2. The more we focus on our self and our stuff, the unhappier we will become
 - a. The greatest love of all is not when we learn to love ourselves
 - b. Greatest love is to love God with heart, soul, mind, strength (**Mt 22:37**)
 3. We won't be able to know that love if we are focused on loving self
- C. God wants to give us a self-image that is His own image (**1 John 3:1-2**)
1. We are the children of God. That isn't what we are like; that's who we are
 - a. God has lavished His love on us and called us his children
 - b. God assures us of a coming time when we will see Him as He is
 2. How sad that we are so willing to trade in that reality for such garbage
 - a. In our rush to be happy, we concern ourselves with things that can't last
 - b. We define ourselves by our possessions and our accomplishments
 - c. We tie our happiness to something temporary & illusionary. C. S. Lewis—
“half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased
 3. God wants to give you so much more than the amusements of happiness
 4. He wants to give you a JOY that lasts for an eternity and beyond