

In the Declaration of Independence, Americans are promised such rights as "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" and yet strangely, happiness, peace, and fulfillment in life often elude us. We chase so desperately after happiness and yet even when we find it, it only lasts a little while before fading away. So often we think that happiness comes by getting things and so we are constantly striving for that special thing that will finally make us really and truly happy and fulfilled. The college degree. That great job. The fast car. The boyfriend or girlfriend. The new baby. The dream house. Strangely, once we reach whatever goal we worked so hard to attain, it only satisfies for a little while before we are on to the next, searching for that illusive potion that leads to happiness, peace, and fulfillment in life.

Sometimes it feels like we are just chasing our tails while true happiness and peace elude us. So what is the key to happiness? How can we find our best life? Wouldn't it be great if we came out of the womb with an instruction manual showing us how to have the best life possible? Actually, there is an instruction book for life. The One who made us has given a book with simple solutions for the most optimal life and yet many ignore this valuable resource in hopes of finding happiness some other way. Many indulge in drugs and alcohol for fleeting moments of happiness. Some shop. Others look to the opposite sex. Still, all these things only temporarily fill the void until the soul once again longs for something more fulfilling.

It has once been said that happiness will never come by trying to be happy. I thought that was pretty profound. The fact is, our efforts to make ourselves happy are futile. We may get the new job and make more money, which may give us a better standard of living, but in spite of what you may have been told, true happiness, peace, and fulfillment cannot really be obtained by money. Jesus said, "one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possess" (Luke 12:15). While people can often cheer us, even the best of relationships is insufficient to entirely

satisfy the longing of our hearts. This is why people continue to chase after other things.

People naturally chase after sinful pleasures to give them some form of satisfaction, but these "passing pleasures of sin" only bring seasons of relief (Heb. 11:25). The irony is, the very things we think will bring us happiness are the very things that rob our peace. God is trying to draw near and give you peace, but sin keeps God at a distance. That is why God calls us to give up our sins. The fact is, God will never ask us to give up anything that brings true happiness. While these things may bring seasons of pleasure, sin cannot bring true happiness. On the contrary! It destroys it and yet many are deceived. They think their drugs, sex, alcohol, cigarettes, or whatever vice they chase after is the key to happiness, so they continue to chase it.

It has been said that insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly while expecting different results and yet so many of us continue chasing after the same things with no satisfaction. Whether it is drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, or some seemingly innocent addiction, these things are robbing our peace and God is calling us to turn away from them. Some accuse God of being a killjoy, claiming that He is trying to take away their fun, but this could not be further from the truth. God has "thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11). He wants to give you a bright future, full of hope. The counsels in the Bible are given to you "that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). Many continue to resist God and cling to the very things that are robbing their peace, while Jesus longs to give them a life full of joy and hope and happiness.

While sin brings seasons of pleasure, it also brings guilt, shame, bitterness, despair, depression and more. It robs us of our happiness. The Bible says, "the way of the unfaithful is hard" (Prov. 13:15). That's right. While it may seem fun for a little while, sin is a hard road. It starts with fun and pleasure and ends in pain, hatred, bitterness, and depression. The fruits of sin reap a terrible harvest in your soul. Sin and selfish acts bring

pain while good works and righteousness bring joy and peace. Most of us know this. We have all tasted the fruits of both. The happiest and most fulfilling times of life are when we focus on helping others and giving. This is no secret.

The recipe for an amazing life is not a secret. God's prescription for peace and prosperity is plainly revealed in the Bible. God says "let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you" (Prov. 3:2). You see, God has given us an instruction book to show us the best life. It is full of instruction regarding the way to peace, happiness, and true fulfillment. Many who have turned to Christ will testify to this fact. In spite of the claims that Christianity is boring, the Christian life is the best life in the world. I know from personal experience as one who has been on both sides and tried both ways. For years I struggled to find peace, joy, and fulfillment in the pleasures of sin and yet my life was continually empty until I gave up doing things my way and decided to try living God's way. I found from personal experience that God's laws and rules are not given to hurt us or take away our fun, but "for our good" (Deut. 6:24).

The principles laid out in the Bible will give us the best life ever. God never asks us to give up anything that is truly for our good. As a loving Father, He only asks us to give up things that are bad for us. When we decide to put our faith in Him and trust His way, we will find true happiness. Many of us have learned the hard way that sin does not lead to the happiest life and yet we seem trapped by it. We know what is right, but we cannot seem to take control of our lives. We feel like Paul who said "what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:15). Many of us have become so trapped in sin that we cannot escape. We see that it does not really bring fulfillment, but we are caught in its viscous cycle of abuse. Fortunately, there is hope.

Are you ready for a new life? A better life? The good news is that God is ready and willing to give it to you. All you have to do is ask and accept it by faith. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all

you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). If you are troubled, stressed, discouraged, depressed, void of joy, peace, fulfillment, and wanting more out of life, Jesus wants to give you peace. Aren't you tired of trying to make it your own way? Haven't you ended up in the ditches of life enough? Aren't you ready to give Jesus a try? God has great plans for your life if you will just invite Him into your heart.

While many continue chasing after money, fame, power, pleasure, luxury, and all the things they think will make their life great they are lacking the one thing that brings real peace and fulfillment in life. So many are looking in the wrong direction while Jesus appeals, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace" (Luke 19:42)! God is offering you peace, joy, and fulfillment. God has great plans for your life. The Christian life is the greatest adventure that you will ever experience, but you must first give your plans over to God and ask Him to make you into the man or woman that He wants you to be. No matter what you are, who you have done, where you have been, God can make your life better than you could possibly imagine, so pray and invite Jesus to come into your heart. Start reading your Bible to find God's path for the best life possible. Find a church or a local Bible study group and get ready for the adventure of your life. Real peace, happiness, and fulfillment are waiting on the road ahead if you will only accept God's free gift of salvation today.

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