

Key One – Set Goals

So often, we drift carelessly through life, like butterflies, moving from one flower to the next, from one pleasure to the next, thinking this or that will make us happy. The problem is that without true purpose and meaning in life, we can never find true fulfillment. That's the great tragedy of denying the existence of God and buying into the big bang theory. If the big bang is true, then you simply exploded into existence, and there is no real meaning in life. The good news is, you did not come from a big explosion. The Bible says you were "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 119:14). God has a purpose for your life. He says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11). The One who made you has a plan for your life. Pursue it. While many of us go through life running in circles, those who seek God's plan for their lives reach greater potential and find true fulfillment, so seek to find God's plan for your life.

Key Two – Positive Thinking

There are always people who see the bad in everything. No matter how good things are going, their glass always seems to be half empty. This is because they have created a mental pattern that is hard to escape. We must train the mind to think positive thoughts. The Bible says, "gird up the loins of your mind" (1 Pet. 1:13). That means you must exercise your thoughts. Some seem to think that they have no control over their thoughts. Not true. You must steer your thoughts, choosing to have a positive mental attitude. The Bible says, "A merry heart does good like medicine" (Prov. 17:22). You see, the caged bird does not sing because its surroundings are ideal, but because it has joy in its heart that just can't be silenced by a cage. That is why "at midnight Paul and Silas were

praying and singing hymns to God" while sitting in prison (Acts 16:25). With Christ in your heart, your life cannot help but sing and shine, because Christ brings peace and fulfillment.

Key Three – Simple Trust

While children often have different ideas from their parents about what will make them happy, mom and dad usually know best. What a child thinks will make them happy is not always the case, and parents must guide the choices of their children, who must simply learn to trust the parent. In the same way, we often think we know what will make us happy, but God knows best. Those who are wise will learn to ignore their feelings and trust God's ways. So many of us have learned the hard way that God knows best. We have wandered into forbidden paths that have left us scarred and bruised, finally realizing that God's guidelines are laid out "for our good" (Deut. 6:24). In spite of what some think, God does not give rules to make us miserable. Solomon said, "happy is he who keeps the law" (Prov. 29:18). Jesus' words are given "that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). If we simply learn to trust God's ways, we will find true peace and satisfaction in life.

Key Four – Smart Media Choices

Media plays such a huge role in society today that it is impossible to ignore its impact on our lives. Unfortunately, many of the things we watch and listen to are not inductive to our happiness. The music and movies we watch frame our lives. While you may think the shows and music you listen to have no impact on you, research has proven otherwise. Advertisers don't pay billions of dollars in some vain hope that their ad will influence you. No, studies have shown that what you watch

has a big influence on how you think. That's why it's important to choose what we watch and listen to carefully. The Bible gives some guidelines. Philippians 4:8 says, "whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things." Make sure your choices match these criteria.

Key Five – Let Go of the Past

So many of us live under the great shadow of past mistakes for so long that it begins to taint our vision. As a result, we destroy all the present good around us, yet some seem to find no release. Here's my advice. First, if you have people you have hurt in your past, go to them and apologize (Matt. 5:24). After that, take a piece of paper and write out all your past mistakes and take them to God in prayer, asking for His forgiveness. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us" (1 John 1:9). Finally, trust that God has forgiven your past and let it go, "forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (Phil. 3:13). God has an amazing plan for your future. Don't ruin it by drowning in your past mistakes. Move forward, trusting that God has forgiven your past and will be with you in your present.

Key Six – Rest

Life is so busy that many people rarely get a moment to rest, but God knew that rest was essential to happiness and peace. That's why He commands, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work" (Ex. 20:9, 10). Of course, God is

asking us to do more than take a day off. He is asking us to spend the day with Him. And not just any day. God asks us to rest on “the seventh day,” which is Saturday, because He placed a special blessing on that day. While this may not make sense to the scientist, God promises that if you cease “from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight...not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth” (Isa. 58:13, 14). Isn’t that a wonderful promise? And it can be yours if you will obey God in simple faith.

Key Seven – Put God First

So often, we have our priorities all mixed up. We continue to chase after things thinking they will make us happy. Of course, many of us have to learn the hard way that true happiness does not come in the things we possess. It reminds me of the story of an auction. A millionaire had died, and they were auctioning all his stuff, starting with a painting of his son. No one wanted the painting, but the butler who knew the son made a bid. When no one else bid, the auctioneer finally said, “Sold,” and started packing up his stuff. The people called back, “What about the auction,” to which the auctioneer replied, “The rules were, whoever gets the son, gets all the stuff.” Similarly, when we accept Christ, everything else is added. Jesus said, “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). So many are striving for the vain pleasures of this world in a vain hope for happiness when Jesus is the key to finding true and lasting happiness, peace, and fulfillment in this life and in the life to come.

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Seven Keys to a Happy Life

